

WYATT, JAMES RODERICK, Ph.D. No Longer Living in Silence from the Margins: African American Male College Student's Voices Centralized Regarding Their Engagement, Persistence and Graduation. (2015)
Directed by Dr. Leila Villaverde. 281 pp.

For more than fifty (50) years African American males' have been a major topic of research studies throughout academia and special interest groups or foundations in the United States. These studies have been situated to analyze data on Black males from K–higher education in search of solutions to the numerous issues this particular group of students face as they attempt to navigate the educational system in the United States. A vast majority of the research characterizes and labels African American males as lazy, detached, academically challenged, at risk and endangered. One of the most troubling findings was that regardless of the amount of research conducted after five (5) decades, nothing appears to have changed; this group still continues to struggle academically and professionally. An in-depth review of the scholarly research on Black males showed that most often their voices were not included in the study findings or results. Using data collected from face-to-face, semi-structured individual and focus group interview sessions with Phenomenology as the main theoretical lens supported by Critical Race Theory, Stereotype Threat Theory and White Racial Framing Theory used to contextualize the finding, this study seeks to insert the voices of African American males into the research from their perspectives and lived experiences. If African American males are going to be successful, it is imperative educators, parents across the United States understand which educational structures, systems, opinions, and programs negate

Black males' ability to navigate and fully engage the academic community in a manner leading to their persistence and graduation.

NO LONGER LIVING IN SILENCE FROM THE MARGINS: AFRICAN
AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE STUDENT'S VOICES
CENTRALIZED REGARDING THEIR
ENGAGEMENT, PERSISTENCE
AND GRADUATION

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2015

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my deepest and heartfelt appreciation to my dissertation chair, Dr. Leila Villaverde, who agreed to take me under her wings during a difficult time in my life and served as a constant source of wisdom, patience, and understanding throughout my years in the doctoral program. This document would not exist had she given up on me and served as a constant voice of reason when I ventured too far out on the ledge with my ideas and comments. I also would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Harvey Shapiro, Dr. Terry A. Ackerman, and Dr. C.P. Gause, who have invested in my academic and professional growth throughout my journey through the doctoral program. Their ability to provide new ways of thinking and challenging me to look deeper into the research served as a source of strength for me.

In addition to my dissertation committee, I would like to pay a special tribute to Dr. Robert Mayo who has been my mentor, colleague and main motivating force behind my pursuit of this dissertation. To all of the other countless individuals who are too numerous to recognize individually in this section; I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation for putting up with me and my crankiness while working on this lifelong goal. Finally, I would like to give special recognition to the “Spartan Hawks”, for allowing me to photograph several generations of fledglings. Having the ability to photograph their nesting activities and campus feedings as a part of their family had a calming effect on me during my most difficult moments.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
 CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Description of the Problem	3
Identifying a Solution	5
Opportunity to Change.....	6
Purpose of the Study	8
Synopsis of Chapters.....	9
 II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	 12
Introduction.....	12
Roberts v. City of Boston (1848); Morrill Acts (1862 & 1890); and Plessy v. Ferguson (1886)	13
DuBois & Woodson Framing of Negro Education 1900-1940	17
Roberts (1848), Lemon Grove Incident (1931), Murray (1936), Gaines (1938), Mendez (1946), Sweat (1950), and McLaurin (1950) Court Cases	19
Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, KS	25
1964 Civil Rights Act	26
A Nation at Risk.....	28
No Child Left Behind Act.....	32
Positioning of African American Males in Higher Education.....	35
Classroom Experiences	43
Masculinity and the African American Male.....	46
Social Impact	49
Life as Citizens of a Democratic Society.....	51
Marginalization of the African American Male's Voice	63

III. METHODOLOGY	65
Multi-Method Phenomenology and Case Study	65
Critical Race Theory	66
Stereotype Threat and White Racial Frame	71
Study Purpose	74
Positionality of the Researcher	75
Influence on the Present Study	76
Research Questions	79
Participants.....	80
Sampling Strategy	80
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	81
Interview Protocol.....	84
Interview Location and Time.....	86
Analysis of Data.....	86
Conclusion	89
IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS.....	92
Introduction.....	92
Participants.....	94
Institutional History	96
Race Relations	98
Servitude/Employment	100
Arrival of African American Students	102
Early Male Students.....	103
Advising Issues	105
White Racial Frame	106
Systemic Issues	109
Teacher Expectations.....	111
Affirmation of Experiences.....	112
Stereotyping	113
Police.....	114
Social Settings.....	117
Academic Settings	118
Pre-College Experiences	121
Grit	123
High Stakes Testing	126
Academic Preparedness	129
Disengaged Educationally	131
African American Male College Experience	134

Defining Success/Mentoring.....	135
Black Peer Mentors.....	137
Peer Student Connections	139
College Classroom Experiences	142
Academic Advising.....	145
Academic Support Services	152
Conclusion	154
 V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	160
Introduction.....	160
Research Questions	161
NCLB and High Stakes Testing.....	161
Advance Placement Courses.....	163
Mentoring.....	165
Peer Mentors	166
College Success	168
Perceived Barriers.....	170
Police Alerts.....	171
Stereotyping	172
Discussion	173
Research Study Limitations	176
Future Study	177
Conclusion	178
 REFERENCES	183
 APPENDIX A. RESEARCH STUDY FLYER.....	203
APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM	204
APPENDIX C. DISSERTATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	207
APPENDIX D. FOCUS GROUP GUIDE.....	209
APPENDIX E. INDIVIDUAL RAW INTERVIEW DATA.....	214
APPENDIX F. DISSERTATION FOCUS GROUP RAW INTERVIEW DATA.....	256

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Study Participants	94

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Social Justice Development Model	150

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Though the colored man is no longer subject to barter and sale, he is surrounded by an adverse settlement which fetters all his movements. In his downward course he meets with no resistance, but his course upward is resented and resisted at every step of his progress. If he comes in ignorance, rags and wretchedness he conforms to the popular belief of his character, and in that character he is welcome; but if he shall come as a gentleman, a scholar and a statesman, he is hailed as a contradiction to the national faith concerning his race, and his coming is resented as impudence. In one case he may provoke contempt and derision, but in the other he is an affront to pride and provokes malice.

Frederick Douglas
September 25, 1883

From the historical perspective of James Anderson and W.E.B. Dubois after the end of slavery (1865) until the early twentieth century (1920) evidence indicated that African Americans made unprecedented academic progress (Anderson and Dubois & Dill, as cited in O'Connor, Horvat, & Lewis, 2006, p. x). However, since that time until the early 1970's, African Americans both female and male were looked upon as underachievers in academia. O'Conner et al., (2006) and hooks (2013), also emphasized that African Americans have been labeled in this manner (e.g. unintelligent, full of rage, single parent homes, health issues, living in poverty, proclivity for criminal activity, more likely to express anger with violent acts and unemployment) based upon societal reasons and that the vast majority of the studies completed primarily focus and compare African

American students success against that of White students without taking into account the differences that exist between other ethnicities. During the last four decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, African American males (it appears that African American females have not received the same level of negative scrutiny) have been a major topic of study for numerous scholars (Caperton 2010; Carey 2005; Gaston 1986; Harper 2006; hooks 2004; Kobrak 1992; Ladson-Billings 1998; McLaughlin, Broxovsky & McLaughlin 1998; Museus & Hedel 2005; Noguera 2003; Rowser 1997, and Steele 2010;) regarding the difficulties they experience while attempting to navigate the educational system from K-12 through higher education. According to Harris & Duhon (as cited in Cooper & Jordan, 2005) African American males have not received this much attention or concern since the early twentieth century “lynching debates.” The difficulties faced include, but are not limited to some of the same issues outlined above yet, also introduces new issues and terms such as suspension, educationally “at risk,” stereotyping, masculinity, drug use, and suicide. The volume of scholarly work dedicated to studying these societal issues without developing viable solutions designed to address the reported problems with African American males’ academic achievement is difficult to comprehend. Examples include “Social Norm Theorists who described situations in which individuals incorrectly perceive the attitudes and/or behaviors of peers and other community members to be different from their own” Berkowitz (2003), p. 1. From the social justice theorists standpoint which Capeheart & Milovanovic (2007) described as a framework that “examines how dominant and non-dominant conceptions of justice arise, how they are selectively institutionalized, how they

are formally and informally applied, what persons and/or groups are being deprived of their formal mandates, and finally, to correct deviations so that justice is served” (p. 1-2). Additionally, Museus, S. D. (2008) and Davis (1994) as well as other notable scholars have opined that a vast majority of reports, papers and studies only employed quantitative research design in an attempt to answer and develop plausible solutions to issues associated with African American male success in academic settings to support the findings.

Upon reviewing a significant number of scholarly articles and reports related to African American males’ academic success without viable solutions or program development, one cannot help but question the underlying reasons for these early studies. It seems plausible, the majority of the studies were conducted for the sole purpose of keeping African American males stigmatized and stereotyped as inferior and incapable of achieving successful academically.

Description of the Problem

Since the mid-1930’s African Americans have been the topic of research studies that have label them as intellectually challenged and inferior to the White race. Since the early 1970’s, the focus of the scholarly research shifted from African Americans as a whole and started to focus on African American males. In this southeastern state, historical data suggest the focus shifted with the 1954 Supreme Court decision ending separate but equal school in America. According to Trelease (2004), in the mid-1950s higher education institutions develop the first admission standards for public universities in this state and for the first time administered a required standardized test for all students

seeking admittance to these universities. It was widely known at that time, the admission criteria and standardized test were designed to limit and control the number of African American students (particularly males) admitted to these institutions. Across the United States, secondary and post-secondary schools refused to admit African American students to their institutions. Governors, college presidents, secondary school superintendents, and many educators adamantly voiced their opposition citing African American students were not intellectually equal to White students due to their sub-standard education; the same sub-standard education developed, controlled and mandated by White political leaders and public school administrators.

Based upon a literature review focused on African American males, there appeared to be a startling gap in a majority of the information presented. The African American males' voice was noticeably missing in a majority of the literature. The silence was more than just noticeable, it was magnified due to the depth and breadth of its absence from previous studies that were published during the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. The studies have been cited depicting African American males as academically challenged, full of rage, living in poverty and engaged in criminal activity (O'Connor, Horvat, & Lewis, 2006). There has been minimal scholarly work published (when compared to the vast collection of work on low performing) on African American males who were academically high performers at higher education institutions (Harper, 2008; Jackson & Moore, 2006; and Maton, III Hrabowski, & Greif, 1998). These the students' voices are also missing from the discourse highlighting their issues and struggles or the skills developed by these high performing students that enables them to succeed. In other

studies cited, Black males have been classified as at risk and endangered (Jackson & Moore, 2006; and Noguera, 2003) as a result of disengaging from the educational system and the number attending college was decreasing at a steady rate. Most of the articles articulated claims about the difficulties African American males faced in America's educational system and offer potential solutions in an effort to correct the issues. For more than 40 years reports and scholarly articles have consistently used negative labels to describe African American males and offer solutions to no avail. However, a vast majority of the research also failed to include the voices of Black males. How do you correct the issue if the voices of the people most affected are silent and never heard?

Identifying a Solution

Harper (2008) outlined his interest in closing the achievement gaps associated with African American males' performance in the academic arena. He believed researchers have failed to look at the opposing end of the spectrum to engage high academic performing African American males in dialogue regarding how they successfully navigated these processes. His (Harper) intent is to bring about a renewed focus on African American males' lived experiences and voices in scholarly work through collaboration with other scholars. These scholars have raised questions to numerous issues associated with research related to African American males. However, Harper goes into greater detail about the scarcity of data on high performing African American male students; the lack of positive role models (speaking particularly of African American male faculty role models); the lack of realistic and meaningful types of academic programs and services aimed at addressing navigational as well as academic

shortcomings of this group and finally, the notion that racism is virtually nonexistent in society today.

This study was designed to provide African American males with the opportunity to voice their lived experiences. From a Critical Race Theorist frame of reference, Ladson-Billings (1998) posited the importance of using voice to define one's own reality. Harper (2006) also intimated the need for research that included the voices of African American males to better understand the challenges they must overcome from their perspectives (lived experiences). These scholars understood the importance of including the opinions and experiences of stigmatized groups to gain better insight and understanding of any challenges faced from the Black males' perspectives. Finding a solution to the problems (perceived or real) faced by African American males requires a broad based (students, educators, scholars, parents, community leaders and politicians) approach not constructed in isolation but including the real life experiences of the impacted group. Including African American males' voices helps to remove assumptions from the scholarly research process and provides for greater focus on tangible solutions that make a difference in their lives. Additionally, it could lead to meaningful programs and services which can be used to close the achievement gap between Black males and their peers.

Opportunity to Change

Based upon future projections regarding the demographic shift occurring across the nation, institutions have the opportunity to change the way marginalized students have been labeled and positioned in society. Harper (2006, 2008, and 2012); Ladson-

Billings (1998); McGee (2013); and Strayhorn (2014) have indicated the importance of changing the general public views of African American males. These views are most often controlled and dictated by mass media reports (hooks, 2014), which have been consistent in the negative manner that Black males have been presented to the general public (e.g., as criminals, poorly educated, unemployed, and least likely to succeed). Harper S. (2009) stated "...Blacks, especially Black men, continue to be caricatured as second- and third-rate citizens in the media [through] a preponderance of deficit-oriented discourse regarding our lives, and the inequitable distribution of resources, justice, and opportunity" (p. 698).

The opportunity for scholars and institutions to create a change in this discourse is now as the demographics are shifting and more students of color are flooding into the school systems. As outlined in the previous section, part of this change must include the voices of any marginalized group to ensure the impacted population has been provided the opportunity to not only voice their lived experiences, but to have their concerns considered and included in the scholarship. Based upon these experiences coupled with other findings in the research studies, perhaps a greater understanding would be achieved related to the difficulties each of these groups experience when attempting to engage and navigate the educational system.

Abrahams (1970) stated African Americans are "consistently misunderstood" (pp. 3-4), and (Bridges, 2011) study seemed to point out that the overall impact of the educational system has been devastating on this group. The only way to change being misunderstood is to first, have an audience willing to not only listen but to also hear the

issues as perceived by the affected group and committed to making a change. Secondly, research conducted on this marginalized group must seek to not only include the voices of the low performing students, but also high performing students as well. We must hear from all levels of African American males' regarding their academic performance to develop meaningful solutions to address actual issues (not suppositions) that arise as a result of the research studies.

Purpose of the Study

Over the last 50 years, numerous scholars have written about the difficulty African American males have experienced within the educational system. The articles have used both quantitative and qualitative analyses in attempts to clearly define the issues subsequently offering solutions or developing programs aimed at addressing these challenges. In stating the problem, it was noted that in a vast majority of the scholarship developed over course of the last 50 years; the African American males' voice is missing or silent. Therefore, further research on African American males is needed and must include their voices and lived experiences. It is through their lived experiences that Black males begin to understand where and how they fit in American society. These experiences also help to determine how this population as a collective or as individuals engage or disengage from the educational system.

The purpose of this study is to secure information related to the academic struggles African American males experience from their perspectives. The results of this study will be juxtaposed against the findings from previous studies looking for commonalities and differences between the study results. The following research

questions were used to delve into the reported and perceived challenges faced by Black males:

- Based upon the lived experiences and perspectives of African American males, what are the pre-college experiences reported by African American males that prohibit them from succeeding academically in college?
- How do African American male college students define success regarding their college experience?
- What are the self-perceived barriers that exist on the university campus (both curricular and extracurricular) that hinder their ability to be successful (defined as ability to persist and graduate from college)?

To answer the preceding research questions, a semi-structured interview process was used to conduct face-to-face participant interviews with African American male college students. The interview sessions took place in a secure location which is detailed in “Chapter III: Methodology”, to protect the identity of the study participants. Semi-structured interview provide the greatest latitude and freedom to respond openly to whatever comes to mind for the interviewees. It is understood this study may yield results that indicate systemic as well as self-inflicted factors which when coupled together may create an elevated negative outcome on the ability of African American males to succeed in academia.

Synopsis of Chapters

From a historical perspective in order to know where we need to go we must understand from whence we have come and the impact (if any) past history still influences lives today. “Chapter II” provides a review of the literature including a historical overview of past laws and court rulings which have impacted the lives of

African Americans throughout the course of American history (1838 – 2014). Also included is a review of surveys, reports and findings associated with the issues surrounding the academic success of the African American male. “Chapter III” explains the research methodology that will be employed in this study. A multi-methods approach will be used in this study blending case study and phenomenological research as the primary qualitative methodological designs used to conduct this study. This research design uses basic information from the voices of African American males to present a case study on their perceptions of their educational experiences combined with the phenomenon of their actions, behaviors and changes centered around the individual(s) from their lived experiences related to master narratives or what is referred to as “traditionally held beliefs” (Husserl, as cited in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p.90). This chapter will outline the number of participants, interview protocol and list limitations associated with this study. “Chapter IV” will be dedicated to reviewing the findings and presenting the results of this study. Using the data collected, I will explain the findings through the voices of the African American male students using CRT and Social Justice Theory lenses to provide a contextual framework from which to platform my work. It is critically important to compare previous findings with this study’s findings based upon African American males’ perspectives to assist with determining how they are and have been impacted in their educational process. In “Chapter V”, the research study questions are addressed and answered using the study participants’ responses to frame the discussions around the current study findings positioned against those from previous

studies. The research limitations, future research and conclusions are also provided in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A Negro Preacher's Prayer
Lord, we ain't what we ought be. We ain't what we wanna be.
We ain't what we gonna be. But thank God, we ain't what we was.
Martin Luther King, Jr

Introduction

In this chapter, I have researched the manner in which African American males have been studied and positioned (labeled) in educational institutions. Additionally, I looked at how these students have been situated historically based upon the laws and policies that were passed to either oppress or assist African American males [or all students] obtain a quality education. According to Abrahams (1970) stereotyping of blacks by whites was perhaps the most significant problem they faced in America. He continues by stating African Americans are “consistently misunderstood because of stereotypic attitudes on the part of whites” (pp. 3-4). When systemic issues woven into the policies, laws, and practices are added to this view stemming back to the early 1900's with Jim Crow attitudes ruling the day; it is understandable why some scholars feel the overall impact of the educational system on African American males has been devastating (Bridges, 2011). Starting with the post Civil War Morrill Act and working my way through to current times, I call to everyone's attention that the issues faced by

African American males have been a long time in the making, particularly when looking at how long their voices have been silenced in scholarly works detailing their issues within academia. Scholars have discussed and written about this pending development as it relates to the African American male for more than fifty years, yet in the twenty-first century, we find ourselves still grappling with the same issues. How do we break the systemic fetters holding African American males hostage and locked out of attaining a quality education. As outlined later in this chapter, one of the first things we must do is create opportunities for this marginalized group to not only find their voices both individually and collectively but to also demand the right to be heard. To demand the resources needed to succeed in secondary and higher education endeavors, and to dismantle the systemic structure which holds so many students of color prisoners and struggling to attain a college education.

Roberts v. City of Boston (1848); Morrill Acts (1862 & 1890); and Plessy v. Ferguson (1886)

The initial Morrill Act (1862) was developed to provide federal land to each state for the development of at least one college that placed a major emphasis on agriculture and mechanic arts (Florer, 1968). The initial bill submitted in 1858 was not received favorably and subsequently failed to garner the necessary support needed to move forward. In 1861, Representative Morrill reintroduced his bill calling for the designation of federal land within each state with those states that did not have federal lands provided with funds established to purchase the land needed for colleges. Prior to the reintroduced bill reaching the Senate, and as a result of behind the scenes lobbying, the Senate sent

word to the House that it had passed the bill (Florer, 1968). According to Lee (1963) this act forced states to increase their efforts on behalf of higher education. Although the majority of initial Morrill funding went to white public state supported colleges and universities, it was also noted that by 1885, six of the eighteen funded universities were separate colleges for Negroes [African Americans]. Research indicates that White land grant institutions typically received 25% more state appropriated funding than state funded Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Brown, 2004). Situated between the first and second Morrill Acts was the 1886 *Plessy v. Ferguson* court ruling. It should be noted the precedent case for the *Plessy* ruling occurred in 1848 *Roberts v The City of Boston* case which will be discussed later in this chapter. In 1886, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* court ruling provided states with the ability to continue racially separated school if the facilities and accommodations were equal (Brown, 2004). The *Plessy* ruling inferred coverage for not only secondary educational institutions but also institutions of higher education. This court ruling would play a major role and influence on African American education for the next fifty-eight (58) years until the rulings in the *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

The second Morrill Act of 1890 had a significant impact on higher education training for African Americans. Prior to the passage of the 1890 act, only three states had used this fund for African American colleges Mississippi, Virginia & South Carolina. Brown and Davis (2001) reported that between the adoption of the first and second Morrill Act more than “200 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were founded” (p. 33). They go on to indicate funding for these universities and colleges was

donated by “philanthropic associations, churches, local communities, missionaries and private donor” (p. 33). The major difference between the first and second act was the requirement that states managing separate colleges for Whites and African Americans must employ an equitable disbursement of funding to each of the respective institutions (Lee, 1963). The overall impact of the 1890 act led to the creation of seventeen African American colleges and universities in the southern states. In essence this act opened the gateway to a higher level of educational training for African Americans; even though the funding was far from equitable and the individuals determining the definition of what was considered equal were predominantly of the majority race. African Americans were finally able to begin the arduous task of educating themselves under the watchful and controlling eyes of white presidents and school administrators. Based upon the research of Harper, Patton and Wooden (2009) the validity of African American students educational process was further complicated due to the materials used (books, articles and other scholarly documents) to teach in the classrooms were considerably substandard and outdated. Many of these institutions (HBCUs) were governed and taught by white administrators and teachers resulted in curriculums focused on education from the white perspective and failed to address the culture of the African American male (Harper et al., 2009). Therefore, African American students were educated using materials that only recounted stories based upon a white perspective. In other words, African American’s were only allowed access to information that was deemed important by their white leader. African American history was intentionally and willfully omitted from the textbooks and other historical materials used in the classroom. Faced with these significant odds,

African Americans were still successful in educating themselves as noted by scholar WEB DuBois and others.

In contrast to WEB Dubois' elite ideology related to the importance of a liberal arts education, Booker T. Washington felt that Black education should be focused on industrial training comprised of learning a technical trade (crafts, industrial and farming skills) and working hard to attain material prosperity (Peterson, 2007). This difference of opinion as to how Black people should educate themselves, coupled with Dubois' belief that Washington used his influence (privilege) at the Tuskegee Institute to control which Negro institutions received financial assistance from White philanthropy was an abuse of his position and were the major points of contention between the two scholars (Peterson, 2007). Washington (educated at the Hampton Institute and founder of Tuskegee Institute with a focus on trades, crafts, industrial and farming advancements) was raised as a slave for a portion of his life in the south and was considered knowledgeable of the needs of southern blacks; while Dubois (educated at Fisk University with a liberal arts and cultural focus) grew up free and in a northern white environment, experienced a different world without the harsh conditions typically associated with slavery in the south. Dubois believed the success of Black men was dependent upon educating the "Talented Tenth who through their knowledge of modern culture could guide the American Negro into a higher civilization" (Peterson, 2007, p. 50). Dubois never fully engaged with the working class African American community at large, especially the southern Blacks. While at Fisk, Dubois was noted to have remained connected with the more affluent members of the community and delved deeply into liberal studies. He believed that

obtaining equality with the White man was of utmost importance for the black man. However, Washington felt African American should be best educate by accepting discrimination in the short term and apply their focus on working hard to better themselves as business men and owners of property. Dubois was quoted as stating, “Mr. Washington believed that the Negro as an efficient worker could gain wealth and through his ownership of capital he would be able to achieve a recognized place in American culture” (Peterson, 2007, p. 50). Dubois, who advocated for political action and civil rights, was also bitterly against allowing oppression (discrimination) to continue unchecked. Instead of political advocacy, Washington advocated for obtaining an industrial education (farming or developing a particular craft) and otherwise doing nothing to draw the attention or wrath of White men (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/race/etc/road.html>).

Dubois & Woodson Framing of Negro Education 1900-1940

W.E.B. Dubois and James Anderson stated “after the end of slavery (1865) until the early twentieth century (1920’s) evidence indicated that African Americans made unprecedented academic progress” (Anderson, J.; & Dubois and Dill, as cited in O'Connor, Horvat, and Lewis 2006, p. x). Boozer, Krueger, and Wolko (1992) opined that African Americans made moderate progress from 1925 until the start of the Great Depression. As the U.S. came out of this depression the quality of the schools attended by African American as opposed to White students declined significantly and with that decline the achievement gaps began to widen. From the perspective of Dubois (1898), where African Americans failed was at achieving or gaining economic equity with the

majority White society. To further compound the issue of economic gain for African Americans Dubois points out two very salient observations;

First – Negroes (African Americans) do not share the full national life because as a mass they have not reached a sufficiently high grade of culture. Secondly – They do not share the full national life because there has always existed in America a conviction – varying in intensity, but always widespread – that people of Negro blood should not be admitted into the group life of the nation no matter what their condition might be (p. 7).

Woodson (2008) expressed in his book *the Mis-Education of the Negro* that “if man’s thoughts were controlled there would be no need to worry about his actions” (p. 60). He continued by stating “if you make a man feel that he is inferior; you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself” (p. 60). Woodson (2008) was referring to the manner in which African American were educated from a White historical perspective in which they played an insignificant or no role in American history. This inferiority complex could also be applied to low resource allocation and poor educational facilities used to train and educate African Americans. Woodson was critical of the elite African American (mulatto) middle class due to their inability to support self-determinism and liberation (Peterson, 2007). According to Woodson (2008) “the educational system was established to support mainstream White America thereby establishing a (educational, ‘political, cultural, economic and racial’) system designed to promote and accomplish White supremacy” (p. 76). The educational system was one that exemplified “segregation, lynching, peonage and slavery” in which the Negro faced and dealt with Jim Crow America upon graduating (Peterson, 2007, p. 76). Dubois on the

other hand was critical about what appeared to him to be poor research on African Americans. He reported that African Americans are continually judged and observed in parts never as a whole body of people. However, the conclusions reached in these studies with low participatory numbers were generalized, published and attributed to the entire race without understanding the authors intent, test validity, subjectivity, training or if the information was factual or just the author's opinion (Dubois, 1898). We were cautioned against any judgments or opinions reached, Dubois made clear prior to acceptance these opinions must be interrogated with the utmost care and discretion to ensure the findings were repeatable, valid and not based upon conjecture. In "*the Negro Ideals of Life*", Dubois was quoted as saying:

Who are Men... it is not simply the capitalist who are men... and finally the world of men holds men of many colors and races, and it is not White men alone who aspire to life's higher ideals, and demand the possibility of their realization (Aptheker 1973, 2001. p. xv).

Roberts (1848), Lemon Grove Incident (1931), Murray (1936), Gaines (1938), Mendez (1946), Sweat (1950), and McLaurin (1950) Court Cases

Prior to the *Brown v Board of Education Topeka, KS* case in 1954 there were several lesser publicized court cases that played a major role in the success of the *Brown* case. While each of these cases alone did not change the Plessy ruling of 1886, when combined together, they provided the rationale and foundation used in the *Brown* case which ultimately lead to the separate but equal ruling being deemed unconstitutional. The first three cases *Murray v. Maryland* (1936), *Missouri ex rel Gaines v. Canada* (1938) and *Sweat v. Painter* (1950) were based upon African Americans seeking

admittance into Law schools at each of the respective institutions; although the situations involved were similar in that all initially started with race, they were slightly different related to how each was handled. In the Maryland case, Donald Murray who was otherwise just as qualified to attend as other students was denied admittance because of his race. The lead attorney for this case as well as the Gaines and McLaurin cases was Thurgood Marshall. Marshall's argument in the Murray case was developed based upon the differences between law schools (Black v. White) and the only way these inequalities could be corrected was to grant Murray's admission to Maryland's law school. The Courts (Federal and Appeals) agreed with Murray and ordered he be granted admission to Maryland's law school. In the Sweat case, Marshall was once again the lead attorney in a suit against the University of Texas. Unlike the Missouri case, the University of Texas created a substandard and underfunded "Black law school" in an attempt to keep Sweat from being admitted into the institution's "White" law school. This case was argued based upon the low academic caliber of the "Black" law school as opposed to that offered by the "White" law school. Due to the gross inequities between the schools, the Court ruled in favor of Sweat stating that "blatant inequities" existed between the schools. They were separate as outlined in the Plessy case, however, they were not equal. Therefore, the Court ruled in favor of Sweat to be admitted to the "white" law school (History of Brown v. Board of Education, 2014). In the case of Gaines, he was also denied because of race, however in the State of Missouri there were no law schools for African Americans. Based upon the 14th amendment "equal protection clause" each state was required to provide a legal education for students within the state boundaries.

Missouri's solution was to financially support Gaines to attend school at an institution bordering the state boundaries. The Court ruled this act unconstitutional stating that Gaines and other black students could not be sent to other states to attend school. Thus Gaines won admittance to Missouri's law school (History of Brown V. Board of Education, 2014).

The final legal case Thurgood Marshall was employed to litigate prior to the *Brown* decision was the George McLaurin suit against the University of Oklahoma also in 1950. Although race was a factor in this case also, the primary issue was the "unusual and adverse effects" of the requirements imposed upon McLaurin as he pursued his doctorate. These requirements included eating, location in the classroom, and impeding his ability to learn at the institution. In essence McLaurin was forced to work on his doctorate completely ostracized from engaging in the learning process with other (White) classmates. He had no social life on campus and the requirements placed upon him even required that he not only select an alternate time to eat, but also during his meal, he had to sit at a table away from "White" students. The US Supreme Court ruled on this matter and ordered the university's actions against McLaurin end immediately (History of Brown v. Board of Education, 2014).

There were three other cases used in the *Brown v. Board of Education* suit that played a major role in its outcome. In the early 1930s there were two cases *Salvatierra v Independent School District [ISD]* (1930) and the Lemon Grove Incident (1931) in which Mexican and Mexican American children were either segregated or attempts were made to create segregated schools but failed through the court system. In the *Salvatierra v ISD*

case, the challenge was based upon the district's ability to completely segregate children based upon their race or ethnicity (Mexican and/or Spanish descent). Initially the injunction was granted to keep the school district from separating Mexican and White students. However, upon appeal the ruling was modified to state that children could be separated by the district based upon a language deficiency (English speaking handicap), but the separation could not be arbitrary in nature (Alvarez, 1986). The Lemon Grove Incident started when the school principal acting under orders from trustees turned away Mexican students announcing they did not belong and directed these students to a two room structure built for these students. The building was called "La Caballeriza (the barnyard)" (Alvarez, 1986). The school board had planned for this segregation six months prior to the students being denied admittance and there was a bill introduced to legalize segregation (the Bliss Bill), which was also defeated. The Mexican families filed a Writ of Mandate calling for the reinstatement of the students to their school. The Judge in this case agreed with the writ and indicted all members of the school board and ordered the students be admitted to the main school. In Judge Chambers' verdict he stated that it was understandable to separate out some of the children based upon a special need, but to do so for all Mexican students infringed upon the laws of California (Alvarez, 1986). In the 1946 *Mendez v. Winchester Board of Education* case, the children of a Hispanic family living in a mixed community in California with white neighbors was assigned to a predominately Hispanic speaking school outside of the school district in which they lived (State Bar of Texas, 2014). Their father filed a suit against the Westminister Board of Education after failed conversations with the Principal, School Board and Board of

Education members to have his children enrolled in their home district. According to the Court documents, the main question posed was not about race, instead Mendez's lawyers posed the following question to the California Federal Court:

Does the segregation of Mexican-American public school children in the absence of a state law mandating their segregation violate California law as well as the equal protection of the law clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (State Bar of Texas, 2014)

It was based upon this question that Judge Paul McCormick ruled in favor of the Mendez family. Judge McCormick wrote: "A paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality. It must be open to all children by unified school association regardless of lineage" (State Bar of Texas, 2014). This statement by Judge McCormick was the beginning of the end for the Plessy ruling and would be one of the key rulings used in the 1954 *Brown v. Board* case. Simply put, McCormick ruling was a declaration that "separate but equal schools were not always equal" (State Bar of Texas, 2014). Even though this case did not receive widespread media coverage, it played a major role in the passage of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling which deemed the Plessy 1886 ruling on separate but equal unconstitutional and struck down this practice in the United States.

As a result of the successful rulings by the Courts in the seven cases outlined above, Attorney Thurgood Marshall and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Team developed their arguments which would be used in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, KS* case. The successful litigation of the Murray, Gaines, Sweat, and McLaurin cases coupled with the "separate but not

equal” judgment rendered by the Courts in California related to the Mendez case provided the grounds to develop the legal precedent which led to the reversal of the 1886 *Plessy* decision. The precedent case used support the 1886 *Plessy* ruling was the 1848 *Roberts v The City of Boston*. Benjamin F. Roberts sued the City of Boston on behalf of his daughter Sarah C. Roberts based upon a city statute (1845, c. 214) that provided remuneration to any child (unlawfully) excluded from public school instruction (Sarah C. Roberts v. the City of Boston, 1848). The court ruled in this case that Sarah had not been unlawfully denied public school instruction. The schools funded for colored children were available to her with the closest being one fifth of a mile from her home. The court also ruled that Sarah would be better served by continuing to attend the separate school for children of color and it was legal and just for this to continue.

It is urged, that this maintenance of separate schools tends to Deepen and perpetuate the odious distinction of caste, founded in a deep-rooted prejudice in public opinion. This prejudice, if it exists, is not created by law, and probably cannot be changed by law. Whether this distinction and prejudice, existing in the opinion and feelings of the community, would be as effectually fostered by compelling colored and white children, to associate together in the same schools, may well be doubted; at all events, it is a fair and proper question for the committee to consider and decide upon, having in view, the best interest of both classes, children placed under their superintendence, and we cannot say, that their decision upon it is not founded on just grounds of reason and experience, and in the results of a discriminating and honest judgment (Sarah C. Roberts v. The City of Boston, 1848).

These schools [separate] were best adapted to provide instruction to these classes of students [White or Black schools] (Sarah C. Roberts v. The City of Boston, 1848). It was this ruling that provided for the 1886 *Plessy* verdict which maintained ‘separate but

equal' public transportation and included the same for the education of Black and White students.

Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, KS

The 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. the Board* reversed the 1886 court ruling in the *Plessy* case ending racial segregation and the operation of separate but equal facilities and accommodations (Brown, F. 2004). The *Brown* case was actually five separate lawsuits against public school systems across America. These lawsuits were “*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Briggs v. Elliot, Davis v. Board of Education of Prince Edward County (VA), Boiling v. Sharpe and Gebhart v. Ethel*” (History of Brown V. Board of Education, 2014). Although the Supreme Court reversed the separate but equal ruling, many states ignored the ruling and continued to conduct business as usual which lead to a second ruling requiring desegregation of schools be completed “with all deliberate speed.” Brown (2004), emphasized that had this second ruling not taken place states would have continued to operate as usual and integration would not have occurred. With the *Brown v. Board* decision, it became illegal to have separate (segregated) schools providing African American children with the same opportunities and access to quality schools, teachers and materials (Brown, 2004; Gooden, 2004; and Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). This milestone ruling set the stage for integration of all school systems across the United States (Harper et al., 2009). Harper et al. (2009) also indicated that despite the Civil Rights movement and *Brown* case, race continued to be used as an indicator of intellectual inferiority and subsequently the impetus for promoting exclusion of African American children from attending White secondary institutions. We are 50

years past the implementation of the *Brown* ruling yet Black males are still struggling to achieve economic, social, educational and professional parity with the White male population. This was especially the case in southern states where slavery and Jim Crow politics were entrenched within the culture and way of life for the southern White population. As a result of this passive aggressive stance, the Supreme Court was forced to render a second ruling (*Brown II*) in 1955 (Brown, 2004). It was noted that instead of speeding up the desegregation process, it actually provided the District Courts with the ability to slow the process down even further or refuse to act in any significant way to enforce this process. It would eventually take another ten (10) years before major change would take place with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Brown (2004) also reported that four additional years passed before the Supreme Court advised the lower courts to speed up the desegregation process due to a suit in Virginia filed in 1968. Although the 1954 & 1955 *Brown* decisions called for immediate action, it would take another fourteen years, the passing of the Civil Rights Act and an additional admonishment from the Supreme Court prior to African Americans witnessed significant changes being implemented to desegregate the U. S. school systems.

1964 Civil Rights Act

Brown (2004) indicated primary and secondary schooling was the main focus of the Supreme Court ruling (*Brown v Board*), however, anecdotally the ruling also applied to institutions of higher education. Even though the ruling clearly applied to all state public and private institutions, “it was not until the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (CRA) that the ruling had governmental backing needed to implement desegregation” (p.

49). The CRA barring exclusion based upon race, color or origin and subsequently cutting off federal assistance to segregated institutions opened the doors of Predominantly White Institutions to people of color. According to Brown (2004) and Gooden (2004), one of the most important components of the CRA was it empowered the US Attorney General to file suits against school districts that continued to practice exclusionary and separatist activities against African Americans. The power vested in the Attorney General's office finally enabled suits to be filed in southern states without African American citizens fearing reprisal in their communities from the White population (Gooden, 2004). According to Kluger (as cited in Brown, 2004) "approximately 500 school districts faced lawsuits for failure to desegregate with all due deliberate speed" (p. 813). The final step needed to fully desegregate the schools came with the 1971 *Swann* busing court decision. The Supreme Court allowed school districts to bus children by race to ensure full compliance with the *Brown* decision. Because of the Courts decision related to separate but equal making it illegal, the doors were supposed to be caste open for people of color although initially to enroll only at the secondary school level. This would not be fully realized until the passage of the 1964 CRA which mandated that all institution receiving Federal assistance were required to admit all qualified students regardless of race. The CRA edict also included higher education institutions that received Federal funding. While this was the right thing to do for people of color; those who enrolled at PWIs encountered a hostile environment inside these institutions and the racial hatred displayed were not conducive learning, created an environment of distrust and separation for student of color living on campus. It would

appear the battle associated with being accepted as an academic equal that existed on college campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s still exist today for many African American male students.

A Nation at Risk

In 1981, the Secretary of Education commissioned a study based on the perceptions that our educational system was broken. The National Commission on Excellence in Education received their charge and began reviewing data and conducting interviews related to the educational system in the United States. The mission statement developed speaks to the importance of education for all is outlined below:

All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair Chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983, p. 112).

This report indicated the U.S. educational system was being damaged by average expectations and efforts throughout our society. There was a clear message that as a nation we were “losing sight of the purpose of schooling”. We were steadily chipping away at the basic foundation of what had once made our educational system strong and vibrant. According to the report “we had in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament” (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983, p. 112)

Palmer, Davis, Moore, and Hilton (2010) stated “African American males experience the poorest educational outcomes compared to other major demographic groups in the United States” (p. 107). Harvey and Harvey (2005) and Levin, Belfield, Muenning, and Rouse (2007) reported the U.S. has not responded to the needs of African American males. In fact their scholarly works seems to indicate that the response to these needs are not only less responsive but also fails to support African American males at their educational institutions. It was also noted that because of this failed attention, persistence and graduation rates particularly for the African American males has been severely impacted (Moore, 2006). Leven et al. (2007) followed up their initial statement by reporting the United States economic position domestically and globally would be elevated if the academic outcomes for African American males were elevated. By examining other scholarly works one can clearly see the overall negative impact on the African American male engaged in the educational system. For example, Jackson and Moore (2006), and Noguera (2003) highlighted key terms such as uneducable, dangerous, endangered, criminals, etc., which are used throughout all levels of academia to negatively characterize African American males. Ferguson 2000 stated “two cultural images stigmatize black males in the United States... one represents him as a criminal, and the other depicts him as an endangered species...both of these images were commonly invoked... for identifying, classifying and making punishment decisions by adults responsible for disciplining the kids” (p. 20). Ladson-Billings (as cited in Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003) stated “students of color may become alienated from the schooling process because schooling often asks children to be

something or someone other than who they really are... It asks them to dismiss their community and cultural knowledge. It erases things that the students hold dear” (p. 49).

Irvine and Armento (as cited in Neal et al., 2003) echoed Ladson-Billings findings by stating “...teachers who are unfamiliar and inexperienced with student diversity often overreact and impose unenforcable rules, expectations, and prohibitors” (p. 50).

Compounding this issue even further was the frequency and duration of suspensions and/or being expelled from school. According to the US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014) “black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students...with boys receiving more than two out of three suspensions” (p.1). This report goes on to indicate that even though Black students make up a small percentage of the student population (16%), they make up the highest percentage rate of students who are referred to law enforcement and a higher number of the students arrested (31%) and they are suspended or expelled (32-42% more) due to school matters. Conversely, White students who make up 51% of the student population experienced relatively the same rate of suspensions and expulsion (31-40%) with 39% of these students getting arrested. This reports also contends that 20% (760,000 out of 3,800,000) of the Black male students suspended nationwide are boys (US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014, pp. 2-3).

Other scholars have linked the poor performance of these students to low self-efficacy, lack of role models, stereotype threat and the overall low expectation of success by African American males, their teachers and guidance counselors in the educational enviornment. Noguera (2003) also reported that “African American males are perhaps

oppressed and classified as behavioral problems more than any other racial or ethnic group” (p.109). The role that some teachers and counselors play in the success of African American students has been studied and found to have a negative impact. In Davis & Jordan’s (1994) findings “African American students’ achievement increases when their teachers have a better understanding of the students’ culture and consider these when designing curriculum” (p. 585). These teachers also “assign more homework and require greater effort and performance from their Black males students and issue higher grades is generally related to teacher expectations” (p. 585). Davis and Jordan (1994) also found that teacher with lower expectations of Black males not only assigned less homework but they also graded these students lower due to their belief the students would not or could not complete the work... “these students do not deserve and have not earned better grades” (p. 585). Haycock (2006) reported that many teachers and counselors typically steer African American males into “low academic ability classrooms” while placing their peers in the advanced courses that will better prepare them for the transition to higher education. Haycock used data from the U.S. Department of Education (Ed. Trust) to arrive at some startling conclusions related to African American students. Looking at Federal longitudinal studies from 1998-2004, of the 117,119 African American freshmen that entered college in 1998, 69,634 failed to obtain a degree within six years (Haycock, 2006). It was also noted this was not a one time phenomena and was actually the yearly attrition average for this population of students. If one were to extrapolate these averages out to the current date, 1,114,144 African American students from 1998-2014 have failed to graduate from college over the last 16

years. According to Neal et al. (2003) it is important for “teachers to maintain high standards and expectations for students’ social, behavioral, and academic competence and create a caring and supportative learning environment that promotes students’ cultural identities and encourages high academic performance” (p. 49).

No Child Left Behind Act

In 2001, President George W. Bush with the approval of Congress signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to hold schools accountable for student achievement levels and penalize schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress as mandated by the Act. The notion of high stakes testing and achievement was highly criticized due to fears that many successful school would fail to meet the rigorous standards (Smith, 2005). The noble intent of this Act was to ensure all students received a quality secondary education that prepared them for the higher education process. Smith (2005) goes on to indicate NCLB was an outgrowth of the 1983 report release “*A nation at risk*” by the Regan administration. Causey-Bush (2005) stated that this document called for increased standards of performance and achievement with a reduction in drop-out rates. This document (*A nation at risk*) was used by federal government to launch the NCLB act and solidified requirements for children who failed to learn at acceptable levels; the school systems could lose teachers and subsequently schools could be repurposed or closed for failure to achieve required yearly progress. According to Popham (2004) the requirements associated with “Adequate Yearly Progress” that all students be at or above state proficiency levels by 2014 are impossible to achieve within the timeframe allocated. Orfield (2000) stated even though the United States is a rich

country, we have large pockets of poor students in substandard schools which will play a major role in the success of the program. Orfield also pointed out the unequal distribution of wealth combined with the clustering of students from low socioeconomic status in large urban area presents major implications for the NCLB act. How this act directly affects African American males could potentially be twofold. First, schools that fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under NCLB for five consecutive years would be required to develop an improvement plan. In subsequent years, if the schools fail to meet AYP they must implement their plan. Based upon information contained on the department of education website, there are a range of options available to schools entering this phase of the process from restructuring school staff including the principal, closing the school, students transferring to high performance school, reopening the school as a charter school, schools controlled and managed by the district school system or an outside consultant manages school (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Closing and/or the complete restructuring of schools could lead to children of color being bused long distances from their home to attend school. Moving students to other schools could potentially have the same or similar effects witnessed in the 1960s with the *Brown* case and the Civil Rights Act (disruptions in the form of altercations, and higher rates of expulsion). Secondly, Smith (2005) cautions us about the reliance on raw test scores used to determine the success or failure of schools. Further, she contends this Act failed to take into consideration the different types of students that attend our schools. Smith seems to infer that NCLB was implemented prior to having a clear understanding of the overall effect it would have on different school systems. Additionally, the NCLB Act

could negatively affect schools that are currently meeting their state's proficiency levels and still fail to meet the federal standards, thus potentially causing quality schools to close. Information contained on a public school's website indicated that only 5% (6 out of 115) of the school districts in that state met the NCLB "Annual Yearly Progress" requirement. Furthermore, 29% of the school districts failed to meet the requirements and are either writing or implementing some type of improvement plan (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The implications for African American males are clear given the possible influence NCLB could have on their educational process and school. Due to the student's and parent's ability to select schools of their choice should their current school fail to meet standards, African American males may select schools that are not prepared or willing to handle their needs. The major implications for NCLB in regards to African American males are:

- 1) Quality of education due to standardized testing;
- 2) School closures and the need to enroll in another school to complete your degree requirements;
- 3) Watered down state proficiency requirements in order to comply with the NCLB Act; and
- 4) Disengagement of and/or a high drop-out rate of the African American students.

Causey-Bush (2005) questioned the extent to which state educational systems will be changed or modified in order to achieve compliance or show accountability. Also outlined in Causey-Bush's research is the need to closely monitor overarching effects of NCLB to ensure schools are provided adequate time to correct issues associated with its implementation plan prior to being closed. Further, consideration should be provided in order to closely monitor this process and develop trends that clearly show the overall

impact of NCLB. There must be a longitudinal study conducted with children (especially African American males) who were in the first grade when the NCLB was officially signed into law. A study of this type would provide valuable information and data regarding the overall impact of the act as well as assist with determining if there are unforeseen issues arising due to using standardized testing to determine learning proficiency of students (Causey-Bush, 2005).

Positioning of African American Males in Higher Education

The research indicated schools serving Black males fail to nurture, support or protect them and was more likely to label these students as behavioral problems, less intelligent and suspend or expel them from school (Noguera 2003; Jackson and Moore 2006). Why are Black males situated and positioned in the educational setting in this manner? What is the general perception of a Black male when he walks into the classroom that would create in an educator's mind this person will not succeed or is less intelligent than others are in the class? According to Neal et al. (2003) "teacher expectations related to school failure ... is defined as inferences that teachers make about the future behavior and academic achievement of their students, based on what they currently know about these students" (pp. 49-50). Neal et al. further states that some researchers (Cecil, 1988; Crano and Mellon, 1978; Ishii-Jordan, 2000; Leacock, 1969; Oswald et al., 1999; Persell, 1977; Rist, 1970) believe "ethnicity and social class both create negative expectations which subsequently leads to differential treatment of students" (p. 50). What is the message/image Black males present upon walking into the classroom? Neal et al. (2003) also noted that teacher's perceptions of their student's

walking style could be viewed as inappropriate thereby having an adversely impact on their success in the classroom. This walking style is referred to as a stroll as opposed to standing up straight and walking with their head up, when strolling African American males are noted to tilt their head to one side and walk with one knee bent or with a slight dip in their walk. It is these behaviors or culturally acceptable norms that teachers may view as “aggressive, rude, intimidating and threatening” (p. 50), and not appropriate for the classroom setting. Based upon the Neal et al., (2003) findings it would appear that teachers in fact perceive not only African American students with a stroll to be lower in academic achievement and highly aggressive, they (teachers) also present the same results for White students who exhibit the same or similar mannerisms. It would appear to be reasonable to assume that some teachers judge the likelihood of high academic achievers and low academic achievers dependent upon the style of walk African American males’ exhibit when entering the classroom.

According to the College Board report on *The Educational Crisis Facing Young Men of Color* (Caperton, 2010) there are two Americas that are commonly accepted, one is highlighted by the best of what the educational system has to offer; the best labs, classrooms, teaching environments and commitment and dedication of the teachers. Conversely, the second America reflects the sentiment of low expectation for the students and a slim chance of attending college upon graduation. The most disturbing finding of this report deals with a “third America” that goes vastly unnoticed and is not mainstreamed in a manner that educators, politicians and scholars are monitoring its effect on Black males. Poverty, unemployment and subsequently incarceration primarily

affect men of color and highlights the failures of our educational system are just beginning to come under the scrutiny of scholars. The most significant finding of the report was that Black males who are disengaged from the educational system were more likely to end up incarcerated than any other group of males. The “third America” observation is more likely to be a special interest story for the news media or presented as a documentary and denotes that it is a societal issue and the result of a failed educational system. If society and the educational system are aware of these issues, why do we continue our struggles with developing systems and curriculums that address the issues instead of perpetuating them? A secondary question is who would benefit most if the system remains unchanged and continues to operate in the manner previously outlined?

Based upon the scholarly works reviewed, it would appear the issues surrounding African American males’ are numerous and at best controversial. Scholars have grappled for years studying the graduation and retention rates of the African American male (Hood 1992; Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson, & Mugenda, 2000; Rowser, 1997; and McLaughlin, Broxovsky & McLaughlin, 1998). They have written of the societal and economic issues that have influenced the Black males’ ability to engage the educational system successfully. The vast majority of the research discussed African American male’s inability to adjust to the culture of the institution. Researchers and scholars have written extensively about the African American males’ ability to succeed in the academic arena since *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954 (Brown, F. 2004; and Alston, Russo, & Miles 1994). Ogbu (1987) believed these studies have for the most part “focused on cultural, social, or economic deprivation that are having an adverse effect on the

black male's ability to engage the rigors of academia successfully" (p. 312). Success is defined as graduating with a diploma/degree from high school or college. In his 2004 article, Ogbu proffered that many of the authors, researchers and scholars lack an awareness of the plausibility that throughout history African Americans have experienced the "burden of acting White" because of their oppositional collective identity and cultural frame of reference (p. 2).

There is evidence that a number of doctoral dissertation studies conducted focused on different aspects of academic success among African American males from elementary, high school and the freshmen college experience; Rouson (2000); Thomas (2008); and Osiris (2005) are three, just to name a few. Further, most often the focus of these studies was on cultural, economic and social factors that have been extensively researched by scholars without a great deal of success at initiating positive change for African American males. Research conducted by Noguera (2003), states "studies most often classify the black male as having the highest mortality rate, contracting HIV/AIDs at a higher rate, lowest academic performers, learning disabled and placed in special education (which impacts their ability to be engaged/included in the educational process). They are suspended or expelled from school at a higher rate and perform significantly lower on GPAs and standardized test than their peers" (p. 432). As indicated in an earlier section, Jackson and Moore (2006), reported that African American males are "characterized at PWIs as an "at-risk" population in education, asserting that they are endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional, dangerous and disengaged academically" (p. 210). In a study on race in the criminal justice system in the United States it was reported

that due to socioeconomic factors African American males were more likely to engage in criminal activities because they reside in poverty areas that contribute to the susceptibility to commit a crime (The Sentencing Project August 2013). It is possible that some African American males may become aware of the negative societal perceptions of them as a group (perhaps through media focus and depictions). If the latter is true, it would seem reasonable that black males upon entering the classroom might assume why engage, fight or challenge a system already designed to fail or expect failure of them? If African American males are entering college faced with preconceived notions and low professor expectations about their ability to be successful academically as outlined in Neal et al. study; would it not be reasonable for these students to expect these biases to negatively affect their success rate?

According to the Shaw and Robbins (2008), report there is a wide gender gap between African American males and females attending college. They also mentioned, “males”, particularly non-white males, are more likely to receive cultural messages that academic success is not “cool” or “masculine” (p. 20). If we were to follow this line of thought, it would also be safe to conclude that African American male students are left to develop their own theories and opinions about where they fit in higher education. Most often the opinions are developed based on lived experiences and what they can imagine as possible (Fordham 1998; Leondari, Syngollitou, and Kiosseoglou 1998; Markus and Nurius 1986; and Ogbu 1991). The most glaring deficiency of these statements and findings over time is that there have only been minor advances realized by African American male students in regards to their ability to engage the university and

successfully navigate the academic rigors, stigmas and biases that confront them upon matriculation.

Since the early 1970's, African Americans both female and male have been looked upon as underachievers in academia. O'Conner et al. (2006); and hooks (2013) also emphasized that African Americans have been labeled in this manner (e.g. unintelligent, full of rage, single parent homes, health issues, living in poverty, proclivity for criminal activity, more likely to express anger with violent acts and unemployed) based upon societal reasons and the vast majority of the studies completed primarily focus and compare African American students success against that of White students without taking into account the differences that exist between other ethnicities or races. Additionally, the views outlined in Bridges (2011) discussed how African American males have had to overcome being denigrated (brutality [beatings], lynching, imprisonment, etc.) for decades which has had an overwhelming impact on their ability to reach their fullest potential academically, socially and economically. Yet even though they have not attained at the levels of other peers, somehow they continue to survive amidst some of the most difficult social conditions and psychological pressures initiated against people.

During the last four decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, African American males (it appears that African American females have not received the same level of negative scrutiny) have been a major topic of study for numerous scholars (Steele 2010; Caperton 2010; Harper 2006; Carey 2005; Museus & Hedel 2005; hooks 2004; Noguera 2003; Ladson-Billings 1998; McLaughlin, Broxovsky

& McLaughlin 1998; Cuyjet 1997; Rowser 1997; and Kobrak 1992) regarding the difficulties they experience while attempting to navigate the educational system from K-12 through higher education. According to Harris and Duhon (as cited in Cooper & Jordan 2005) African American males have not received this much attention or concern since the early twentieth century “lynching debates.” The difficulties faced include, but are not limited to some of the same issues outlined above but also introduce new issues and terms such as suspension, educationally “at risk,” stereotyping, masculinity, drug use, and suicide. The volume of scholarly work dedicated to studying these societal issues without developing viable systemic solutions designed to address the reported problems with African American males’ academic achievement is difficult to comprehend. Examples include “Social Norm Theorists who describe situations in which individuals incorrectly perceive the attitudes and/or behaviors of peers and other community members to be different from their own” (Berkowitz 2003, p. 1). From the social justice theorists standpoint in which Capeheart and Milovanovic (2007) described as a framework that “examines how dominant and non-dominant conceptions of justice arise, how they are selectively institutionalized, how they are formally and informally applied, what persons and/or groups are being deprived of their formal mandates, and finally, to correct deviations so that justice is served” (p. 1-2). Additionally, Museus (2008); and Davis (1994) as well as other notable scholars have opined that a vast majority of reports, papers and studies only employed quantitative research design in an attempt to answer and develop plausible solutions to issues associated with African American male success in academic settings to support their findings.

Finally, Harper (2008) outlined his interest in closing the gaps associated with African American males' performance in the academic arena. He believes researchers have failed to look at the opposing end of the spectrum to engage high academic performing African American males in dialogue regarding how they successfully navigated these processes. His intent is to bring about a renewed focus on the African American male's lived experience and voice in scholarly work through collaboration with other scholars. These scholars have raised questions to numerous issues associated with research related to African American males. However, Harper's emphasis on illuminating the fact that there is very little data about high performing African American male students and the lack of positive role models (speaking particularly of African American male faculty role models) may prove invaluable when understanding how African American males perceive their environment. He also emphasized that there exist a lack of realistic and meaningful academic programs and services aimed at addressing navigational as well as academic shortcomings, and the notion that racism is virtually nonexistent in society today are still critical issues that must be studied and addressed. When looking at the complete body of work related to African American males' academic success without viable solutions or program development, one cannot help but question the underlying reasons (intentions) for these early studies. Is it plausible some of the past studies were conducted for the sole purpose of keeping African American males stigmatized and stereotyped as inferior and incapable of being successful academically to perpetuate the slave-master mentality? A mentality, whose sole purpose

was to increase the wealth of the majority on the backs of minorities through cheap or free labor by restricting or prohibiting their ability to educate themselves.

Classroom Experiences

Schools are designed to classify (through grading and standardized testing), and sort (by race, gender and class) which contributes to the disparities encountered in the educational and professional outcomes for the African American males (Gause 2008). In numerous scholarly documents, the black male is now being labeled an “endangered species” in the classroom (Noguera 2003; and Jackson & Moore 2006). When someone uses the words “endangered species” it immediately conjures up mental images of animals in need of human interventions to ensure their survival. Have African American males been disengaged from the educational system at such an alarming rate that their extinction is near?

When comparing this information with the outcomes of Harper’s 2002 (as cited in Gause 2008) research, the data clearly draws attention to how perverse and difficult the issues are associated with the African American males’ educational progress:

- Black males made up only 4.3 percent of students enrolled in college,
- Degree attainment only increased .02 percent from 1997 to 2003,
- In 24 years, black males seeking doctorates increased by 147 enrollees,
- The widest gap between female and male undergraduate enrollment is between African American females and males at better than 27.2 percent difference, and
- White males earn more than 10 times the number of degrees black males earn.

When considering overarching implications of this data on the success of African American males to receive a quality education, and weighing the effects of the African American home and community; it is extremely important that we strive to understand how black males view their masculinity based upon struggles they encounter at PWIs while attempting to earn a college degree. We must also consider the burden that most of these students carry as a result of letting their family and communities down if they fail to attain a degree. The research indicated that schools are sites where African American males are marginalized and stigmatized as opposed to being sites of intellectual growth, hope and opportunity (Noguera, 2003).

The Dellums Commission formed by the Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies to analyze physical, emotional and social health policies that limit life paths for young men of color, used a report developed by Harper (2006) to highlight national trends and disparities associated with the status of Black males in higher education. The data gathered in this report and outlined below relates to the poor success rate of African American males in higher education. The report highlighted current trends and the academic status of Black males attending public institutions of higher education in all 50 states. Based on the information contained within this report, most troubling was the emphasis placed on academic support and care Black male athletes receive juxtaposed against the academic support and care that typical undergraduate Black male students receives on the college campus. One of the outcomes of this report was a recommendation that public universities review the high percentage of Black males on its basketball and football teams and critically question how in

athletics Black males are overrepresented when compared with the demographical breakdown within athletic departments. Conversely, when compared against general student body Black male students attending public institutions are underrepresented. The recommendation that stood out above all others was requiring athletic teams' scholarships be reduced to reflect the percentage of students who graduate from the institution.

I mentioned earlier the vast majority of studies on African American males has centered on retention and graduation (Capaldi, Lombardi & Yellen 2006; and Carey 2005). The research tends to suggest that Black males enter college unprepared to engage in the academic rigors of higher education. A number of Black males enter college without having the necessary social and cultural skills needed to successfully transition into higher educational institutions (Tinto 2004). The literature seems to infer the social and cultural skills black males lack are what would normally be events or skills associated with White social and cultural skills. These skills appear to be engagement in the arts, classical music, plays and other extracurricular activities normally associated with colleges and universities (it should be noted here that by no means am I inferring that all whites have acquired a taste or appreciation for these skills). Instead it would appear logical that adequate social and culturally relevant programming would include arts and music of Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indians and international students which are not mainstreamed within the collegiate environment on a consistent basis.

Tinto (2004) indicated that “despite the findings highlighted in studies regarding persistence and graduation, Black males as well as other males of color (especially

Hispanic/Latino) could overcome these institutional shortcomings if proper systems and programs are in place to transition them into higher education” (p. 14). Student academic support services as well as student affairs staff members must engage potential black male students prior to matriculation to college and should be working to adjust institute policies and changes to their outdated approach when dealing with the issues Black males (Black females appear to not have the same struggles as the male counterparts or have developed coping mechanisms to achieve a relatively high level of success as measured by graduation and retention data,) and other male students of color bring to the college campus. It is in the collective best interest of everyone, to ensure that programs and services not only exist on our campuses but that we work to engage these students in our campus community. An array of scholarly papers highlight the nurturing process taking place at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) for Black males, which potentially leads to a greater success rate in their retention and graduation from HBCUs. As a result of this success it would seem that PWIs should realize the importance of initiating contact with Black male students earlier and begin the transitioning process upon admittance to their universities.

Masculinity and the African American Male

Masculinity is another critical area of study associated with Black males and the difficulties they have adjusting on college campuses. For the purpose of this study, masculinity is defined as the multiple and varying personal identity markers males use to define their place/space in society, as they perceive it. The definition of masculinity for one person will not fit the definition others use to explain how they envision fitting in the

world. According to Gause (2008) “masculinities are not expressed in isolation, but are influenced, informed and shaped by school culture” (p. 9). Black males enter college full of doubt about whether they belong and can fit in on a college campus. The research indicated that historically black males use their sexual prowess, defiance of authority, tough exterior (macho) appearance and reliance on material goods in an effort to achieve a greater sense of masculinity (Baber, Aronson and Melton 2005). They fail to take into account the consequences associated with this type of lifestyle and risk fathering children, or becoming engaged in illegal activities that lead to incarceration. The research suggests Black males value their reputations and respectability as positive attributes associated with masculinity. Gause (2008) asserts “current black masculinity is rooted in masculine hero worship in the case of rappers and as naturalized and commoditized bodies in the case of athletes” (p. 10). Gause goes on to state the end results of this hero worship is a “heterosexual black masculine cyborg that exhibits no remorse” (p. 10) and is devoid of emotions and thought. As educators perhaps we should connect our teaching strategies to something these students are passionate about (e.g., hip hop music, sports, civic engagement, mentoring youth, art, etc.) developing and tying pedagogical and learning initiatives to their interest and use them as the foundation for helping Black males navigate academia. The impact of pop culture (e.g., Jay Z, Sean Combs, Ludacris, and Lil Wayne) on black masculinity must be investigated and studied in an attempt to understand the Black male students arriving on college campuses today.

Baber, Aronson and Melton (2005) tells us that “African American males gender identities are fragmented because resources that would support respectability are not

available to them and that historical stereotypical issues attributed to black males still plague and influence the manner in which they are perceived in the classroom and on PWI campuses” (p. 54). In their attempt to understand the difficulties faced by the African American male on a college campus, Baber et.al, investigated masculinity and the role it plays on how these students adjust to college life. The research also indicated there are a number of states that are also reviewing these issues in an effort to understand the historical significance that oppression has played in how African American males perceive and the likelihood that they can successfully persist in the current higher education system. Perhaps we have only scratched the surface regarding the myriad of issues that not only inform black males about how they are perceived by society, but also establishes how these students perceive themselves in the higher education environment with systemic issues dating back to their founding. As we focus on issues associated with masculinity, we should also consider African American male students who are gay, Bi-sexual, transgendered, intersex, queer and questioning to thoroughly address all of the issues faced by these students. Issues faced by African American males associated with alternative life styles and determining to disclose their preferences is most often not received positively in the African American community. Based upon heterosexual standards and the impact those views have on society, it would appear African American males who are either uncertain or still veil their orientation struggle to find or label their masculinity. These issues have the potential to play a large role in these students’ retention and persistence at the university. The ability for these students to engage the campus and feel accepted is critical for them to remain engaged with the university.

Social Impact

Woolley et al. (2008) looked at the effects that community had on students' educational achievement in their schools. Although this research primarily focuses on elementary and high school, I believe there are important lessons which can be learned about how communities within the university structure impacts students of color (specifically males). After conducting a brief literature search to determine if significant scholarly research had been conducted on campus climate/culture and its effect on students of color's ability to navigate, embrace and engage the university and subsequently how the university embrace and engage these students. Socially how are African American males perceived across the campus? How does this community perception affect the learning environment on campus and inform black males' views of how they fit into this society and culture? Inasmuch as African American males are categorized as at-risk in education and labeled endangered and dangerous; is this perception of black males replicated on campus by faculty and peers? Black males are already faced with a tremendous uphill battle just to feel accepted in the campus environment, coupled with these feelings is the understanding there are individuals who hold on to the believe that African American students do not belong in PWI communities because they are not qualified academically to be on those campuses. We appear to be comfortable with the way things seem to be presented and it creates the impression that contentment for maintaining the current status rules the day when it comes to changing the perceptions of African American males. If society and scholars continue to label them as lazy, dysfunctional, and endangered; how can we expect black male students to

continue striving to change the negative mindset and literature espousing their inability to achieve academic success by engaging in critical thinking and research at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)? In contrast to this perspective of Black students and males in particular, Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek 2004 indicated in their study of African American students that those attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) “devote more time and effort to academic activities; experience more significant gains in intellectual development, critical thinking, and cultural awareness and enjoy a greater sense of personal and social benefits than African American students at PWIs” (pp. 272-273). Scholars have noted (Fleming, and Berger & Milem as cited in Harper et al., 2004) that African American males indicated a much higher affinity and sense of connectedness in HBCU environments, even when working with “White professors than peers of the same race attending PWIs” (Robinson, 1990, p. 209). Flowers & Jones (2003); Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif (1998); Jackson F. (2003); Jackson & Crawley (2003); and Steele (1999) also concluded, that the higher education community is extremely challenging for African American males’ both students and professionals. These issues are historical in nature and have been studied for more than a decade without much success or resolve. Perhaps as scholars and educators engaged in transformative educational experiences, we should embrace the shifts in our society’s demographic make-up and become change agents by creating a shift in the academic culture that is beneficial not only for African American males but for all students to engaged and thrive successfully.

Life as Citizens of a Democratic Society

The aspiration to democracy is unobtainable without a society's commitment to a life-long education to develop the “capacities for associated living.

John Dewey

What is an educated democratic society? A democratic society is one that provides for and educates its citizenship (regardless of their differences) in the methods of critical analysis, critical questioning, engaging and enhances their ability to challenge knowledge proffered without fear of censorship, oppression or physical harm for the betterment of humanity. Of major importance in the process of critically questioning is an understanding of what I consider most important questions associated with critical analyses. Who benefits from the knowledge proffered, how are the results presented and how does this information inform, enhance and advance knowledge for a democratic society? I firmly believe the benefits of a democratic society should be equally shared between all members of that society and not centrally controlled. Shapiro (2006) indicated that our lived experiences and investigative inquiry of all knowledge known to humanity is what makes us unique and provides individuals with the ability to advance humanity. McLoughlin (2009) discussed “the value of drawing knowledge from the breadth and depth of lived experiences from other individuals and cultures different than our own” (p. 109).

The educational process for children begins much earlier than the formalized state mandated educational system. Children begin life without biases or preconceived notions of class, sex, race, or religious affiliations. It is through their lived experiences and

parental oversight that values and learning is initiated. Behaviors are rewarded or punished based upon an established set of norms within each household and community. It is these norms coupled with societal views and white patriarchal control of the curriculum taught in our schools that are contributing factors regarding why educating children to advance democracy is failing. Our failure from an academic perspective is to define the meaning of living and prospering in a democratic society; a society that affords the voices of marginalized individuals the right to not only be heard, but also one that attempts to understand and seriously considered their views as plausible during in our decision-making processes. Shapiro (2006) describes a vibrant democracy as a society that has been educated in “creative and thoughtful expression with the ability to reinvent their world and not simply conform to it” (p.109). Other researchers have documented the importance of teaching students to listen to “other” voices in the classroom which could perhaps lead us to a more democratic society that would not only hear but also understand and connect with the voices of other cultures and understand how that impacts us globally (McLoughlin, 2009). Friedman (as cited in ASHE Higher Education Report 2009) offered this analysis of the world as it related to how we communicate and collaborate democratically with others; “the world can be seen as ‘flat’ because it is a single global network in which convergence is the norm, knowledge centers are connected, and individuals collaborate across boundaries” (p.12). Without lived experiences and voices associated with this process we might as well be doomed to wondering in the wilderness blindly with no purpose for true democracy will never exist. Freire and Giroux (as cited in Mayhew & Engberg 2010) emphasized the importance for

individuals to be engaged in a critical world view. This critical world view would be one exemplified by individuals' refusal to accept information (truths) on simple face value. Critically engaged students would not only question information, they would also investigate the source of that knowledge, understand how information is aligned based upon viewpoints of the source and develop their philosophical position according to their critical analysis of the information and how it has impacted their understanding of society. Simply put, if the individual has lived a life of oppression, marginalization and fear, in all likelihood their views of a democratic society will be tarnished and virtually non-existent. Developing space to hear and engage the voices of marginalized individual's lived experiences through counternarrative or qualitative perspectives are critically important in a true democracy. In an educational setting if the lived experiences outlined above exist and students are marginalized and oppressed early in the formal learning process, democracy becomes just another word without substance, devoid of the ability to change lives. Based upon various scholarly views above, perhaps the focus should shifted to potential issues related to democracy and our failure to educate, challenge and develop our youth's ability to critically investigate and engage our global society.

Why are we failing to educate our children? Why are they being disengaging from the educational process and why are schools digressing in their efforts to educate young people to engage in the democratic process? According to Paul Willis (as cited in McLoughlin 2009), "education never was and is not about equality, but inequality ... educations' main purpose, the social integration of a class society could be achieved only

by preparing most children for an unequal future by ensuring their personal underdevelopment” (p.4). Dewey (1938) positioned the purpose of schooling as preparing students to live pragmatically in their current (immediate) environment. Counts’ (1978) idea of schooling was less about independent living and more of a societal approach; it was about community and the ability to change one’s social order. In the early 1980’s Adler combined the efforts of Dewey and Counts by proposing a three pronged approach to education; 1) citizenship; 2) self-improvement (personal growth); and 3) preparing for a career (job) (Adler, 1982). According to deMarrais & LeCompte (1995) schooling has four distinct purposes, a) to teach math and reading skills, b) assimilation of immigrants, c) prepare for jobs and d) social and moral responsibility. There are varying, supportive and opposing schools of thought (positive and negative) related to the purpose of schooling. Due to the volume of information in our current society from foundations, corporations, politicians, and the media, we have become desensitized to the overwhelming control these powers have to educate children to follow their directions without questioning. It appears as though our current educational practices, pedagogy and assessment processes resembles the “banking theory” of the late Paulo Freire whereby children have their heads filled with random information poured inside that supposedly constitutes learning and developing an educated democratic society.

If one were to ask student to discuss the setting/process by which most of them were educated; more often than not, students speak about how information was provided and they were trained to respond to standardized test questions that had a specific answer.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of these students never critically discussed or analyzed the content of their coursework, experienced the intellectual freedom to explore other possibilities or the voice to engage in dialogue with their fellow students and teachers regarding the validity of the subject matter and possible alternative outcomes.

Additionally, students discussed standardized methods by which their overall knowledge base was assessed. It became abundantly clear that a number of these students understood they only needed to memorize the correct answer on a multiple choice test and retain it for a short time period in order to pass. This method of standardized testing reduces students' intellectual freedom and curiosity to question, analyze or challenge information they are required to study. In essence, standardized testing limits creative thought, individualized initiative (voice), curiosity and inquiry associated with learning and subsequently engaging in the creation of a true democratic society. There appears to be very little critical dialogue about the materials covered whereby students engage their classmates in discussions that question the validity of the materials taught or covered on test. Instead as Shapiro (2006) points out "schools are becoming nothing more than locations where information is crammed into student's heads" (p. 7). He goes on to state that in today's society, "education has taken on the mantra of intellectual narrowing and due to this reduction the assessment of knowledge has been dummed down to its most simplistic form, the yes/no answers on a standardized testing bubble sheet" (p. 7).

Giroux (2006) observed that public and higher education may serve as the only spaces where adults provide an appropriate environment for children to become critically engage socially, evolve into symbols for a democratic future and provide for future

generations of youth the same opportunity to critically challenge what the previous generation advanced as knowledge. McLoughlin (2009) highlighted the wisdom behind “the importance of providing a pedagogical space whereby all students regardless of race are educated in a democratic manner that provides space for all voices to be heard” (p. 113). The NCLB law accompanied by standardized testing appears to in some cases move and position students at the opposite end of the democratic educational process. Instead of educating students to question and engage in transformational dialogue, which would call for a change in the current system thereby running the risk of being counterproductive to the efficiency of the current system. The current educational system programs them to respond to a set of questions in search of one right answer. The students only need to remember the correct response to the specific question. Perhaps we would be better served to remove their brains, insert a motherboard with memory chips and program children to respond similar to artificial intelligence (robots) without questioning; going about life programmed to respond to a set of commands and perform in a certain manner. Where is the classroom dialogue and exchange of ideas and understandings germane to learning and continuing to develop/enhance a democracy for future generations of critical learners and investigators? This educational approach resembles the system described by Horace Willard (as cited in Giroux & McLaren 1986) in the 1890’s regarding the lack of space inside the classroom for teacher’s to engage or promote individuality, originality or enhance the investigative skills of their students. Instead, they are confined to teaching in rigid curriculum that seems to mandate dumping

as much information into their student's heads as possible in hopes of achieving the percentage requirements outlined in NCLB law.

In contrast to the NCLB law and its prescribed approach to educating, hooks (2003) discusses the value of creating educational spaces whereby everyone's voice is important. Furthermore, she also stressed the importance of being critically engaged in a classroom setting whereby everyone's opinions are valued and discussed without fear of reprimand or being oppressed. The use of standardized testing fails to create dialogical spaces that are critical to the academic, physical and social success of students as they prepare to become leaders of a democratic nation. In following this line of thought, it would appear plausible to assume the overall impact that standardized education is imparting on our increasingly global society will eventually yield negative results. A true democracy demands that we have the ability to educate and hear voices domestic and international in order to enhance the future of all children and the global societies in which they will live. This particular mindset situates itself opposite the current dominant perspective which is focused on nationalism (a profound belief and support for the interests of our nation) and promotes commitment to the views and overarching culture/teachings of this country's societal norms.

The current model employed for educating our young people today in the age of accountability and curriculum content has become the breeding ground for large corporations and government to consumerism and commercialize our educational process. Corporations are charged with developing textbooks, teacher's handbooks and curriculum in the cookie cutter mold of one size fits all. The educational system utilized

is one of memorizing information on a short-term basis that may or may not be relevant to the student's lived experiences. This shortsighted educational approach fails to prepare students to engage each other in critical dialogue relevant to enhancing our chances of achieving a true democratic society. Instead our youth are taught at an early age to consume; chasing after the next best product or the most technologically advanced gadgets on the market. One of the major issues with this approach to consumerism is our children are taught at an early age to consume constantly purchasing the newest technological advancements. West (2004) describes this marketing and purchasing (consuming) activity as placing a "premium on buying and selling, consuming and taking, promoting and advertising which consequently devalues community charity and the improvement of our overall quality of life" (p. 5). Corporate and commercial America spends billions of dollars developing advertisements to market and subsequently sell their products to our youth which perpetuates and heightens their need to purchase. Shapiro (2006) cogently stated "the selfish, materialistic world of consumer culture leaves little room for lives predicated on responsibility and obligation to others" (p. xvii). Based upon this "consumer culture," children are being conditioned and taught (either via parents, schools, community or the media) early in their formative childhood years situated around consumerism which promotes and contributes to their apathy and abysmal thirst for knowledge that could lead to understanding how to become critical thinkers with the end result being to advance humanity. Their reality of the world and how to value it or change it can be found on the pages of google.com, Wikipedia, or the world-wide web. Providing children space for critical dialogue to take place in

educational settings whereby different cultural experiences are espoused that challenged, critically review and develop skills necessary for an inclusive democracy. The effects of consumerism may contribute to the inability of our students to communicate effectively inside our classroom spaces. Students are more accustomed to communicating through texting and social media sites than engaging in face to face dialogue that not only stimulates deeper investigation into the material, but also facilitates growth through their ability to exchange, challenge and express their thoughts and lived experiences. This dialogue between diverse populations of students would enhance educator's ability to create teachable moments and introduce democracy into the curriculum.

Students reflected upon how their secondary education experience failed to prepare them for college. They enumerated a variety of issues with the secondary educational process; the teacher provided all of the information or directed students to specific sites to secure the information. Their school work did not require them to drill deeply into the issue and critically analyze, question or develop alternative viewpoints regarding the subject matter. Shapiro's (2006) research supports these student's statements by asserting that, "schools are becoming crude cramming factories; distant from locales where students learn to seek knowledge through critically questioning, reasoning and interrogating information" (p. 6). Students are only required to memorize and regurgitate the body of knowledge already in existence. Given this trend of educating our youth, and the noted difficulty African American male students experience with the educational system, this type of educational process appears to only enhance those issues by creating a larger achievement gap.

The impact of the current educational system on African American male student's academic achievement has been dissected, studied, labeled and categorizes their ability to successfully engage this system (Jackson and Moore, 2006). Many black students are labeled "disadvantaged" because they enter the higher educational system from lower socioeconomic status communities and appear to lack the formalized skills necessary to successfully navigate higher education (Kobrak, 1992). They are also more susceptible to being classified as mentally challenged or diagnosed with a learning disability (Noguera, 2003). However, it is the educational system failing to engage the African American males. Research studies have indicated that the majority of educators in secondary education (K-12) are overwhelmingly white middle class females who bring with them issues surrounding culture, class, privilege and educational background (Larson & Ovando, 2001).

Based upon these findings, is it not surprising that African American males struggle to be engaged by an educational system that is supposed to be democratic, yet one that embrace exclusion by attrition. How can educators expect black male students to be successful when they are either not in school or when in class disengaged by the professors and students from contributing in discussions or class projects and the democratic schooling process? Noguera (2003) stated, "ethnicity and socioeconomic class of students impact how they are perceived and treated by adults (teachers, principals, and guidance counselors) in schools" (p. 433). He goes on to further state "there has been very little research conducted on these perceptions related to how they impact black males in the classrooms" (p. 433). Scholars have situated their pedagogy

around the premise that ultimately education systems have failed in America due to the crisis surrounding democracy (Giroux & McLaren, 1986).

Due to the scholarly research highlighting various and multiple labels and stigmas used to explain the educational difficulties experienced by African American males; is it possible the behaviors that some display (disinterested, unruly, angry and aloof) on a daily basis are a direct reflection of their interpretation of how scholarly research and schools have portrayed them over time? Depending upon the perspective (cultural lenses [White as opposed to Black], research focus, and interest convergence) of the individuals conducting the research, it is possible that information being conveyed falls short of a true reflection of the black males' ability to be engaged by a democratic educational process? Perhaps the unintentional/intentional result of research conducted on African American males contributes to their demise from an educational perspective and has been calculated and woven into the fabric of educational system. Is it plausible that due to white patriarchal control over what is published and whose voice is heard and viewed as important, additional barriers within the educational system are created that initiates disengagement? Aronson, McGee, Pulliam, and Strack (2011) conducted a year-long study entitled "Photovoice" that provided video and still cameras to a group of African American male students to photograph their perceptions of the educational process at the collegiate level. The documentaries each of these young men presented were both eye opening and insightful regarding their perceptions of how they are viewed and educated on a college campus. Perhaps the most significant photo and statement associated with this study illustrated books, science lab equipment and other educational tools arranged

under a caption that read “You give me all the tools to be successful, yet you fail to teach me how to use the tools appropriately.” Black males are more likely than any other group in American society to be punished, labeled and categorized for special education and to experience academic failure (Meier, Stewart, & England; and Schott Foundation (as cited in Noguera, 2008). Noguera (2003) goes on to state that most African American males who have successfully navigated the educational system have done so “in spite of and not because of the schools they attended (p. 435).” These scholar’s statements are indicative of the educational structures faced by African American males, therefore, it stands to reason the structures outlined above contribute to and enhance the likelihood of being disengaged by the system rather than the students disengaging from the system. The overarching consequence of black males’ being expelled and ostracized from the educational system results in a lack of representation in the democratic process. African American males seem to realize and understand the likelihood of being the victims of preconceived notions and stereotypes upon stepping into classrooms across America. They also understand clearly the results of being pushed deeper into the recesses of the margins where their voices carry little significance or weight due to a monolithic approach applied to all black males throughout the educational systems. This statement seems to be in direct conflict with John Dewey’s writings on education and the aims of what schooling should constitute. According to Dewey (1916) schooling should be focused on helping children develop into good citizens. How can students, particularly African American males hope to achieve good citizenship and a democratic education, when they are expelled at rates higher than any other demographical group in America?

If African American males are not participating in the educational system because they are expelled, then they cannot take part in the democratic educational process. It would seem that in order for African American males to achieve academic success within the “democratic” educational system, the system must be overhauled or redesigned in a manner that embraces not only black males but all marginalized groups regardless of their differences. Developing spaces to hear and engage the voices of marginalized individuals lived experiences through counternarrative or a qualitative perspective is critically important in a true democracy. In an educational setting if the lived experiences outlined above exist and students are marginalized and oppressed early in the formal learning process, democracy becomes just another word without substance and therefore, devoid of the ability to change lives.

Marginalization of the African American Male’s Voice

Based upon the literature above focused on African American males, there is a significant gap in the scholarly work that has been conducted and presented on this population of students. The undergraduate African American male’s voices (lived experiences) are noticeably missing in a majority of the literature reviewed. There has been minimal scholarly work published (when compared to the vast collection of work on low performing students) on African American males who are academically high performers at higher education institutions Harper and Nichols (2008); Maton, Hrabowski, & Greif (1998); and Jackson & Moore (2006) highlighted their issues and struggles associated with being engaged by their institutions. The silencing and marginalization of African American males’ perspectives in scholarly publications has

been called into question by a number of recent scholars (Harper 2008; Jackson & Moore 2006; Tinto 2004; Noguera 2008; and McLaughlin, Broxovsky & McLaughlin 1998).

The silence is more than just noticeable, it is magnified due to the depth and breadth of its absence from previous studies that were developed and published during the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 undergraduate African American males regarding their lived experiences/perceptions from high school through higher education. I used the information collected in these interviews to include African American males' voices into the body of research associated with navigating, persisting, and succeeding (graduating) academically in college. Their voices and perspectives must be included in the narratives related to the issues commonly associated with matriculating to and graduating from institutions of higher education. We need to develop a better understanding of the real systemic hurdles African American males must overcome to attain a degree. One of the best manners in which this understanding can be achieved is through listening to these students describe their experiences engaging an educational system in the United States that was not designed to embrace or nurture them.

In the following methodology chapter, I define the research design methodology and theoretical foundations used during this study. Also included in this chapter is a section which outlines my positionality and experiences as the researcher who grew up in the south during the intense racial and civil rights movement. The research questions, participants, sampling strategy and other information are also discussed in this chapter to provide an understanding of how the study was conducted and ensure it can be repeated by other scholars using a similar study protocol.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Multi-Method Phenomenology and Case Study

Qualitative research is defined as an “inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore social or human problems” Creswell (as cited in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 89). Phenomenological methodology, which is couched underneath qualitative research was the primary methodological design used to conduct this study. This research design documents how individuals experience a particular phenomenon (e.g., racism, microaggressions, stereotyping, and academic performance/persistence) from their “inner perspectives” or lived experiences as they relate to master narratives better known as “traditionally held beliefs” Husserl (as cited in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008); and Vogt & Johnson, (2011). Sokolowski (2000) defines phenomenology as “the study of human experience and the way things present themselves to us in and through such experiences” (p. 2). Phenomenology is used to investigate the perceptions of African American males and describe what they have experienced, the manner in which it was experienced and attempts to make sense of the impact of the phenomenon (Moustakas as cited in Harper & Griffin, 2011). Using intentionality (“consciousness or experience of” something) to interrogate spoken, written dialogues, and the medias impact on this population’s experiences arise and are scrutinized for their influence on academic success. This methodology also serves as a

critical lens through which previous research can be interrogated related to the positionality of African American males and their attempts to navigate educational systems. In comparing past findings in which the African American male's voices are absent with the findings derived from my study (which includes their voices), I hope to better define the salient problems this demographic of students face as they strive to navigate the higher educational system. Case studies have differing perspectives regarding what constitutes a case studies and how they should be applied. The "cases" studied in this dissertation is the missing voices and lived experiences of African American males from the scholarly literature. A multi-methods approach will be used in this study blending case study and phenomenological research as the primary qualitative methodological designs used to conduct this study. This research design uses basic information from the voices of African American males to present a case study on their perceptions of their educational experiences combined with the phenomenon of their actions, behaviors and changes centered around the individual(s) from their lived experiences related to "traditionally held beliefs" (Husserl, as cited in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p.90).

Critical Race Theory

I used Critical Race Theory (CRT), Stereotype Threat Theory (STT) and White Racial Framing (WRF) as the theoretical foundations from which to review and interpret the data collected through a face-to-face interview process. Critical Legal Studies (CLS) as defined by Bell (as cited in Delgado and Stefancic, 2001) is a multidisciplinary legal approach aimed at providing opportunities to oppressed people thereby enabling them to

have a voice as they seek a socially just world and is the genesis of CRT. CLS looks critically at a number of perspectives from which to develop its opinions (law, history, gender and ethnic studies, etc.). Delgado (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1998) stated that “CRT begins with the notion that racism is “normal, not aberrant, in American society and because it is so intertwined within our social order it appears to be normal and naturally situated to people in our culture” (p. 11). Harper (2009) defines CRT as “a conceptual lens used to examine racism, racial (dis)advantages and inequitable distribution of power and privilege within institutions and society” (p. 31). It is important to understand how African American male students perceive their positionality inside the constructs of the educational system (i.e., classroom, campus community, home and professional life). The self-efficacy of these students is a perspective that must be taken into consideration when working to understand how they are engaged and viewed by the education system. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual’s perceptions of his/her abilities and competencies in performing various tasks (Bandura, 2005; Rottinghaus, Lindley, Green & Borgen, 2002). Museus, Harper and Nichols (2010) indicated “a growing body of evidence which suggest self-efficacy mediates the impact of other salient environmental variables that impedes African American male’s ability to achieve academic success” (p. 817). Self-efficacy for African American males appears to be an important factor in their ability to successfully navigate higher education (Bandura, 2005; & Rottinghaus et al., 2002).

Based upon the research of Zirkel (2002); and Caperton (2010) social scientists have discussed the importance that role models play in the development of goals,

perceptions and aspirations for young people. The overall impact of the lack (or a small number) of role models for African American males has a dramatic effect on their overall self-perception and positive outlook regarding education. In other words, it is more lucrative and gratifying for this group to engage in gang-related activities than it is to engage in a failed educational process. In light of being constantly reminded of how poorly African American males perform academically, one cannot help but question the overarching impact of this information on how these students grapple with refuting or accepting statements like the ones outlined above. According to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his speech at Arizona State University in 1964, “when people are told over and over again that they are inferior, they begin to believe it and they lose a sense of dignity and self-respect.” By providing these students with an avenue to have their voices heard related to their efficacy and other perceived/real oppressive issues connected to their academic success, perhaps we can begin to address these issues, create positive outcomes that can be replicated, and close the gap between their academic successes and those of their peers. Furthermore, the pending results may serve as a counternarrative to the master narratives that have been developed over the last forty years focused on reasons for the reported low academic success rate of African American males.

Master narratives have been used to establish and govern how social structures and processes are managed in society (Stanley, 2007). Due to the social construct of race in our society, the dominant group (mainly White males) most often controlled and wrote the vast majority of research related to marginalized groups. “Research on marginalized groups by members of marginalized groups reveal experiences, which counter master

narratives are often compared against the White norm” (Fine, Weis, Powell, & Wong as cited in Stanley 2007, p. 14). In light of these comparisons, most often the research of the marginalized scholar was found to be lacking in clarity, research design or methodological approach.

Through CRT individuals have the ability to use storytelling (born out of “legal storytelling”) as a means to convey from their perceptions “lived” experiences, which serve as counternarratives used to dispel master narratives and interrogate universal assumptions about people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pp. 37-39). Ladson-Billings (1998) states the use of voice (naming your reality) in CRT is a key experiential element for people of color as opposed to the repressive nature of the “science and legal” discourse, which mutes the voices of marginalized groups. This study used the voices of African American male college students to offer perspectives and views to interrogate, ferret out possible intentions, and potentially counter the master narratives developed about their ability to successfully navigate the educational system. I believe consideration must be provided to systemic, cultural, and historical views of African American males in reference to their intellectual abilities and dedication to achievement in academia as students and as professionals upon graduation from college.

According to scholarly research even high achieving African American males attending Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) are met with suspicion from professors and White peers who doubt their intellectual competence; therefore, they ignore the African American male’s contributions in class or fail to select them as members in group projects or collaborative work (Charles, Fischer, Mooney, & Massey,

2009; Cokley 2003; Fries-Britt, 1997; & Harper, 2009a as cited in Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram & Platt, 2011). The final CRT tenet, interest convergence in which the dominant group allows underrepresented groups to advance when it is equally or more beneficial and promotes their race, will also serve as a lens through which to frame and interrogate how African American male's voices and academic success have been silenced in the body of previously published scholarly work. When considering the overall impact of interest convergence and the White Supremacy ideology that has dominated our society for hundreds of years, adding the perspectives of African American male college students to the body of research in existence may shed light on the major issues faced by this group of students. Without the voices of this characterized 'at-risk' group, we are missing a critical element in our studies associated with the issues influencing how African American males engage the educational system from their perspective. Once we have collected evidence/data, it may be possible to reverse the attainment gaps, which currently exist through new program development to address the shortcomings. In the following section, I look at the effects of other factors that may be contributing to the African American male's status and positionality in academia. The first theory I will be investigating was developed by Steele and Aronson (1995) who studied the impact of stereotype threat on a student's ability to perform effectively in a classroom setting. I feel it is important to note their theory related to stereotype threat was studied using participants across multiple gender, race and ethnic groups.

Stereotype Threat and White Racial Frame

As secondary lens in my study, I used Steele and Aronson's (1995) theory associated with the effect stereotype threat (STT) has on a student's ability to perform in the classroom at a relatively high level. The premise behind STT phenomenon is once race or ability becomes a prominent factor associated with test taking/academic performance, the achievement of the effected group is suppressed or negated due to pressure associated with not performing in a manner, which validates expected (reported) shortcomings or outcomes of the group. Contrary to negative opinions regarding this theory, the results outlined in the "stereotype threat" effects study are one of many possible issues linked with the attainment gap between African American males and other underserved/majority groups. Pressures African American males experience due to media and scholarly proclamations highlighting their reported difficulties academically from an early age through adulthood may have a profound negative effect. I find it tenable that the release of data and reports such as:

Challenge The Status Quo Academic Success Among School-age African American Males 2012, African American Male Achievement Research Collaborative sponsored by the Congressional African American Caucus Foundation 2012; Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education Report 2012; the US Department of Education and The Urgency of Now Report from the Schott Foundation for Public Education 2012),

which outlines the superiority of Whites over minority groups plausible as one of many potential causes of low achievement and disengagement of African American males as well as other marginalized groups from the academic process. In *Writing Beyond Race*, hooks (2013) noted that the most powerful teachers of White supremacy are the mass

media and our schools inasmuch as these are the sites whereby stereotypes, misconceptions and fears are cited and ingrained into our minds. I am not proclaiming the reports outlined above are the primary causes resulting in this group's exodus and struggles with academia. Instead, I am illuminating the potential of the stereotype effect when these reports and negative images are combined with media coverage (radio, television, print and internet outlets) and how the classroom is managed or mismanaged as potential causes for the academic shortcomings of African American males.

Additionally, if we add scholarly publications, it is possible the stereotypical statements and their effects could be part of the leading causes eliciting the African American males' separation from education. Hooks (2013) states "to find any book that looks at the impact of television's biases in the directions of White supremacy on the minds of young African American children would be a rare occurrence" (pp. 153-154). She goes on to posit that "television images constantly and consistently displayed reflect the White Supremacy mindset and educates children about skin color and the most undesirable color is Black; White Supremacy is the covert ideology that is the silent cause of harm and trauma" (p. 5). I included print and electronic media in the conversations due to its visual impact on perceptions and attitudes towards African American males' educational and societal issues. When this ideology is coupled with stereotype threat theory and Feagin's (2010) theory on the "White Racial Frame" (WRFT), which is defined as:

[T]he broad, persisting and dominant racial frame that has rationalized racial oppression and inequity impacting all U.S. institutions; it is essentially the 'centuries-old worldview' of Whites constructed into a racial frame that has shaped relationships and institutions in fundamental and racialized ways. This

oppressive racial frame of the dominant group can be seen in all phases of society today from our schools to the political leaders elected to manage our government (p. ix).

I believe that common themes and the potential for contrasting perceptions and views may be presented that were not considered in previous studies. Feagin's study included statements from White students regarding their conversations and the use of racial comments or jokes. The students also discussed when they were likely to participate in conversations that included racial slurs or jokes. One of the critical facts noted in his work was in reference to White students, indicating that when talking in groups of two, racial comments or slurs are not typically made. However when larger groups of White students gather, the use of racial slurs and other types of oppressive comments are frequently used by these students to describe their peers. I believe strongly this systemic framework can be correlated to inform and shape future studies conducted on African American males (and other oppressed groups) while developing deeper understandings and methods to overcome many of the issues associated with their self-image.

According to Abbott (2008) one of the many research methods used to help us understand, manage and organize time through the telling of stories (perspectives of lived or observed experiences) is narrative research. Narrative research provides individuals with the opportunity to tell their life histories or perspectives from their point of view and as they understood things to be either during their lifetime or over a shorter period of time. It is from this perspective that I collected data regarding the experiences of African American males enrolled at a four-year university.

Study Purpose - The overarching goal of this study is to gain insight into and insert the voices of African American males into the generalized body of knowledge associated with their reported inability to successfully matriculate and subsequently graduate from college. This is a qualitative investigation (Creswell as cited in Lunenburg & Irby, 2008); an inquiry process of understanding based on methodological traditions that explore social or human problems. According to Creswell (2003):

A qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., multiple meanings of individual experiences, meaning socially and historically constructed, with the intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspective (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change-oriented) or both. It also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded-theory studies, or case studies. The researcher collects open-ended emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data. (p. 18)

Qualitative studies are focused on a holistic review of words, actions and information related to the perspectives of the participants. Creswell (2007) also suggests that interviews conducted in qualitative research should occur in a natural setting; meaning a location which is non-threatening, limits distractions and one that safeguards the identity of the participants in the study. The positionality of the researcher is critically important to the overall tone and tenor related to how the data is collected and analyzed. The lens through which the researcher is reviewing the information gathered is critically important and helps frame the discussion that occurs throughout the study. Other sections outlined in this chapter document and discuss critical areas associated with this study that include: participants, interview protocol, interview location and time, risk, research questions, methodology and data analysis.

Positionality of the Researcher

Born during the Civil Rights Movement, I have unique lived experiences with racism, classism, riots, bigotry, police brutality and human ignorance regarding the intellectual ability and need for individuals to live together harmoniously for the betterment of all people. My experiences (both positive and negative) have helped shape the person that I am and are constantly at work facilitating the changes that must continue to occur in order for me to become the scholar and servant leader I strive to be. The spiritual lyrics outlined below speak to a number of issues faced as a youth, adult and professional who witnessed firsthand the difficulties associated with growing up African American in the south.

He Still Loves Me

Took me a while, but I'm finally here. I just wanna testify
Make it crystal clear see I've been picked out, to be picked on
Talked about out my friend's mouth I've been beat down
Til he turned my life around

Seems like I always fall short of bein worthy, cuz I ain't
good enough but he still loves me. I aint no superstar, the
spotlight ain't shinin on me cuz I aint good enough but he
still loves me

I used to wake up some days and wish I'd stayed asleep,
cuz I went to bed on top of the world today the world's on
top of me everybody's got opinions. They ain't been in my
position that it breaks my heart when I hear what they have
to say about me yeah. I'm not perfect, yes I do wrong I'm
trying my best but it aint good enough. Shunned by the world
if I don't succeed Cuz I aint good but he still loves me

If you aint worthy just raise your hands and let me know that
you understand that we are all so blessed to be loved. Stand
for him and fall for anything cause through his eyes we all

look the same. What would we do without blame?

Feels like we always fall short Of bein worthy cuz I aint good
enough but he still loves me I aint no superstar the spotlight
aint shinin on me cuz I aint good enough but you still love me

I'm not perfect yes I do wrong I'm tryin my best but it aint good
enough Shunned by the world if I succeed cuz I aint good
enough But he still loves me I'm not perfect yes I do wrong I'm
tryin my best but it aint good enough shunned by the world if I
I succeed cuz I aint good enough but he still loves me. The
Lord still loves me

by
Beyonce Knowles & Walter Williams, III

Influence on the Present Study - I experienced many of the difficulties associated with growing up during the civil rights movement. I witnessed, experienced, pondered, fought, conformed to, and lived the frustrations many African American males have experienced during this time period and throughout their lifetimes. I critically questioned my existence and self-worth as a person, a student, a husband/father and most recently as a professional. Why am I here? What purpose do I serve? More importantly, *how can I change and inspire change to occur that will have a positive effect on the lives of African American males as well as society as a whole?* I battled prejudices, faced internal and external segregation, and weathered the storms and roadblocks conspired to prohibit my desire to achieve my dreams. Most of my professional life was spent listening to others attempt to advise me of my strengths and weaknesses, and what I needed to do in order to achieve my dreams. Those offering impressions of what motivates me, and what I am most passionate about, missed the mark considerably. They only see the person I appear to be today, not the days, months or years that have impacted, informed and shaped the

lenses through which I view and navigate the world at large. In other words, I do not matter as an African American man in America. I live on the boundaries and constantly experience the bitter taste of marginalization from the privileged sectors of academia and the world.

Based upon my lived experiences growing up during the racially intense time-period of the 1960s and listening to the issues today that others are experiencing, I understand I am not alone out in the margins. The world as we know it has changed tremendously over the course of time, yet listening to the lived experiences of the current generation of African American males, I see that there are yet additional changes to be instituted. With this realization comes the understanding that I have two choices: 1) stay in the margins and continue to allow others to determine my future, or 2) take a stand against this structure not for my own self-gratification, but for the present and future generations in hopes they will not have to endure the pain of being silenced or face the feelings of non-existence when in the midst of the crowd.

Scholarly findings (Foster 2004; Harper 2006; hooks 2004; Jackson & Moore 2006; Museus, Harper, & Nichols 2010; Rottinghaus, Lindley, Green, & Borgen 2002; Noguera 2003; and Ziekel 2002) highlight the plight of low academic performing African American males regarding the enormous difficulties faced locally and nationally in the educational system. In practically all educational markers (i.e., GPA, retention, graduation rates, standardized test scores, suspension rates, persistence, etc.) used to track student success, African American males typically are the lowest performers academically when compared to other peer groups. One of the most troubling findings is

that regardless of the significant amount of scholarly research focused on African American males for more than five decades, nothing appears to have changed; this group continues to struggle academically and professionally. According to hooks (2004):

(A)nyone who claims to be concerned with the fate of African American males in the U.S. and fails to speak out about the need for this group to radicalize their consciousness to challenge the status quo is colluding with the current and historical ideology to keep the African American man in his place psychologically locked down and locked out (p. xiv).

I strive to understand what university structures, systems, opinions and programs negate their ability to navigate and fully engage the academic community in a manner leading to their graduation. These comments tie directly back to the struggles I witnessed as a youth, as a young man, and now as a professional working with an African American fraternity, and general student group dedicated to navigating higher educational system at a PWI while maintaining their identity and culture. Two important questions come to mind:

- Why does there seem to exist this negative air of resistance, distrust and overall disengagement of the African American male from the educational process?
- Why as professionals (teachers, advisors and college professors) have we allowed the educational system to disengage African American males by failing to support and nurture their intellectual and professional growth?

Due to the length and time period that these studies took place; one must question if these issues are by design (systemic), happenstance or artifacts of the data. Furthermore, follow-up questions and statements could include:

- If this trend (resistance, distrust and disengagement) is found to be the cause, what can educators, scholars, administrators, and parents do to develop the appropriate systems and programs to address this issue?
- Does a systemic undercurrent exist in education and the moral fabric of America designed to discourage, vilify and oppress African American males as well as other students of color and encourages their mass exodus from the educational system in the United States?

Based upon my work as a professional, universities should question how they can encourage and engage African American male students by seeking to understand them on a more intimate level and develop a positive pedagogical climate (both inside and outside the classroom) designed *to include, engage, value and assist* these students to navigate and interact successfully with the campus community.

Research Questions

In the review of literature related to the academic success and difficulties of African American males' inability to take advantage of the US educational system and successfully educate themselves, it was noted that there was a significant gap in the research and scholarly reports. The missing information in a vast majority of the scholarly works reviewed was the voices of African American males in the research. The purpose of this study is to secure information related to the academic struggles African American males experience from their perspective. Specifically, 1) based upon the lived experiences and perspectives of African American males, what are the pre-college experiences reported by African American males that prohibit them from succeeding academically in college? 2) How do African American male college students define success regarding their college experience, and 3) What are the self-perceived barriers that exist on the university campus (both curricular and extracurricular) that hinder their

ability to be successful (defined as ability to persist and graduate from college)? These questions serve as the basis upon which the results of the interviews are compared and analyzed to determine if there were differences between the master narrative viewpoints and those of the African American male students.

Participants

The population of concern in this study was undergraduate African American male college students located on a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the southeast region of the United States. This population of students was selected based upon past research documenting their low academic success rates and studies, which produced labels such as endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional, dangerous, behavioral problems, less intelligent and more likely to be suspended or expelled from school (Noguera, 2003; Jackson & Moore 2006). The participants selected to participate covered the undergraduate experience from sophomore to seniors who grew up in rural or urban environments and attended schools at low resource institution as well as some from high resource schools. The majority (60%) of study participants grew up with both parents in the household, 20% from single parent homes and the final 20% from homes in which the parents were either divorced or legally separated.

Sampling Strategy - The sample size of the study group consisted of 10 participants' selected using recruitment flyers strategically placed on campus in high traffic areas such as the cafeteria, student union and classroom buildings bulletin boards. In anticipation of in-depth responses from the participants based upon the interview questions; phenomenological researchers Boyd (2001); and Creswell (as cited in

Groenewald, 2004), recommend that two to 10 participants would be sufficient to reach saturation in this methodological design. Based upon the recommendations outlined above, I believe that saturation was achieved once 10 participants were interviewed for this study.

Listed on the recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) was telephone contact information of the researcher for potential participants. During the initial telephone conversation, information related to the study (voluntary study, right to withdraw, anonymity/confidentiality protected, risk and IRB pre-approved consent forms) was discussed to ensure individuals understood and voluntarily agreed to participate. Additionally, once potential participants expressed interest in partaking in the study, a date, time and private meeting location was established for the researcher and interviewee to review and sign the IRB approved informed consent document (see Appendix B). At that time, the participant was provided an opportunity to ask questions or voice concerns related to their involvement in the study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

I selected the African American male population based upon a personal interest in their success both academically and professionally, and the fact that their voices were missing from the scholarly work that was conducted and published. Prior to the study participant selection process, the interview questions were pilot tested with African American college students to ensure the questions were not just understandable, but understood in the same way. The pilot test also provided valuable information related to the student's comfort level with the interview questions. Participants (10) were all

solicited at one Predominantly White Institution geographically located in the Southeastern part of the United States. The solicitation was conducted through the use of flyers strategically placed in high traffic areas on campus seeking voluntarily participate in my research study of college age African American male's perceptions of the educational system and how it has engaged or disengaged them as students.

The participants were also solicited to partner in a focus group discussion with their peers related to experiences and perceptions of the educational system. Individuals selected to participate were required to be at least 18 years old or older (max. 25). They must self-identify as an African American male and be a currently enrolled undergraduate college student. Each participant selected engaged in a taped interview session that lasted between 45 minutes to an (1) hour with the Principal Investigator (the researcher), answering questions and telling their academic story. Approximately 50% of the individual participants engaged in a one (1) hour focus group discussion. In the focus group setting they were asked to build upon their college experiences and perceptions collectively in frank discussions with their peers. The interview questions for the focus group session were based upon the individual interview questions and the data collected during the interview sessions with each participant. Each of the participants was questioned on the community setting in which they grew up and attended high school. Based upon their responses, 60% of the African American males were from an urban community, 30% came from a rural community and 10% classified their experience as being mixed both rural and urban. Two out of the ten participants or 20% ended up spending an extra year in college. Ironically, both stated the extra year was due to poor

advising; being rushed through the university system without their advisor walking them through academic options to ensure placement in the appropriate major. These students were in separate degree tracks and disciplines at the university. The participant's classification breakdown consisted of two seniors, three juniors, five sophomores and no participants in the freshman class. When researching and cross checking majors it was also noted that none of the participants were enrolled in and pursuing the same major. Four of the participants were majoring in separate disciplines within the business school (accounting, business administration, economics and information systems and supply chains), one in broadcast cinemas, political science, music, sociology/African American studies, history, and Community and Therapeutic Recreation/Entrepreneurship.

I reviewed demographic data located on the university's institutional research homepage to gather persistence percentages related to African American males participating in this study and found that males who entered college in 2009 were retained at a rate of 70.2% compared to 53.8% white, 48.8% Hispanic and 70.6% Asian males five years after entering college. The four year graduation rate for the same class of African American males was listed at 18.5% compared to 25.7% white, 26.8% for Hispanic and 23.5% for Asian males. Due to the lack of sufficient data available on the institutional research website for the other participants in the study I could not perform a review of their persistence and graduation data. However, I was able to review data files related to each of the Professional Schools and the College of Arts and Science at the institution and found that the largest percentage of African American males were enrolled in majors in the School of Health and Human Sciences (27.95%), followed by the School

of Business (23.77%) with the College of Arts and Science ranked third (20.29%). The data indicated African American males are retained at the institution at a relatively high rate, but their success rate for graduation is extremely low. I used this data to compare against the interview results in Chapter IV Results and Findings.

There are a limited number of scholars engaged in collecting the perspectives and lived experiences of these students infusing their results into the academic knowledge base upon which conclusions are reached and findings generalized broadly across all African American male students. Harper's (2006, 2009, and 2012) studies have indicated we must broaden our perspectives of African American males to include research that drills deeper into the issues experienced by these students. We must analyze academic performances throughout all levels (high and low) within this population of students to understand what skills or factors have enabled or deterred them to/from successfully navigating higher education. Our studies should not focus solely on students who are struggling to navigate the educational system. It is important for scholars, politicians and parents to be knowledgeable of and understand the successes and issues impacting African American male achievement. Based upon these and other scholarly findings, practitioners could focus their efforts on developing measures to eradicating the academic struggles of African American male college students to navigate and engage in the educational system.

Interview Protocol

This study followed a semi-structured interview process to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants. According to Bernard (as cited in Cohen & Crabtree 2006)

semi-structured interviews are best conducted when the researcher will only get one opportunity to interview a study participant. This interview process followed the interview questions (found in Appendix C) which were used for this project. This interview guide includes the list of open ended interview questions covered during the session, and assists with creating a dialogue and level of comfort between the researcher and the interviewee. Semi-structured interviews also provide the ability to deviate or ask additional questions that may arise as a result of information shared during the interview session. This process allows the interviewee the ability and freedom to openly state whatever comes to mind related to the questions posed. Data collection was performed by conducting in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 10 African American male undergraduate college students. Interview questions were designed in an open-ended format to promote an easy and comfortable atmosphere for the participants. The participants had cumulative GPAs ranging between 2.2 and 4.0 and their classification range was sophomore - senior year in college, no students in the freshman cohort contacted the researcher to participate in this study. Half of the individual interview participants also self-selected and took part in the focus group session. All interviews were digitally recorded to ensure that data is captured, transcribed and available for further analysis. These digital recordings were secured in a lockable file cabinet in my office to protect the confidentiality of all participants. Pseudonyms were assigned to the study participants and used when reporting the interview results. Their institution was also given a pseudonym. Upon completion of this dissertation, documents bearing

identifiable information and notes will be shredded and all digitally recorded conversations will be deleted.

Interview Location and Time

In order to ensure the protection of each student's identity during his participation in this study, I conducted private interview sessions in an office on the third floor of the University's Administration building. The interview sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes to one (1) hour in duration. Only one participant interview session exceeded the one hour limit by 10 minutes however, the student requested to extend our time in order to complete the interview session in one meeting. Follow-up interview sessions were not necessary to clarify or delve deeper into the statement(s) seeking contextual definition of phrases or statements. Through the use of member checking each of the participants was provided the opportunity to comment on the data from their interview session. Their responses indicated that the information was a factual reflection of their responses to the interview questions. The focus group interview sessions were conducted in a secure access large conference room on campus. This session provided the study participants with an opportunity to dialogue with one another sharing similar, dissimilar, and other instances when they were positively or negatively impacted academically, socially or psychologically at their university.

Analysis of Data

The focus group interviews guide (Appendix D) provided the protocol followed during focus group sessions. After all data were collected and transcribed verbatim, each participant received a digital copy of their session for review and modification if

necessary. In the correspondence sent to the participants, they were informed that should they find any discrepancies between what they said and how it was transcribed, they were to contact the researcher to establish a face-to-face meeting date and time to review and correct the information contained in the transcribed document. Based upon the responses received back from them after their review of the interview transcripts, 100% of the participants confirmed that the data transcribed by the research was a true reflection of their taped statements. This method of determining the validity of these documents is called member checking. Member checking is a type of transactional validity used to ensure an accurate reflection of the data (Cho & Trent, 2006). According to Lincoln and Guba (as cited by Foster 2004); and Cho & Trent (2006) member checking is perhaps “the single most important method of increasing the credibility of qualitative research” (p. 230). Foster (2004) indicated that based upon the feedback derived from the dialogue between the interviewees and the interviewer a clearer understanding of phrases, comments or reactions is achieved. Additionally, Curtin and Fossey (as cited in Carlson 2010) stated member checking is a “way of determining whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants’ experiences” (p. 1105). Carlson (2010) goes on to further state that this process can also be used with participants in a focus group setting discussion with the researcher.

The data collected in individual and focus group sessions were analyzed using a tiered process. The initial phase of the tiered analysis involved looking for key words or phrases by noting the frequency in which key words and phrases appeared in each of the interview participant’s and the focus group responses to each of the interview questions.

The second phase of the tiered analysis involved a line by line review of the individual participant's interviews attempting to determine if there were words or phrases that only appeared in the individual's interview session. The final analysis conducted on the data consisted of a question by question review of the data attempting to drill deeper into the responses to determine if there existed common themes, words or phrases that could be used as sub-themes to the broad meta-themes and themes already established based on the participant's responses to each of the interview questions. I believe that using this tiered process of reviewing participant responses to look first for key words or phrases in each of the questions looking for common themes, experiences and perceptions about their college and high school educational experiences. The participant data in this study was also compared to the findings from previous studies as well as my theoretical framework outlined earlier in this chapter looking for similarities, differences and outliers related to how they interface either by affirming the previous finding or determining how they differ. This analysis is similar to a grounded theory approach however, differs due to the intense scrutiny and interrogation of the data (using a tiered process as well as from previous and the current studies) associated with phenomenological methodology. In the results section of this study I compare previous findings against the findings of this study looking for answers to the research questions posed earlier.

The data (semi-structured interviews, recordings, and institutional demographic information) both recorded, transcribed verbatim and institutional demographics were reviewed, a coding system developed and manually coded for each of the participants and the focus group interviews. According to Coffey and Atkinson (as cited in Basit, 2003, p.

144) “codes are links between locations in the data and sets of concepts or ideas, and they are in that sense heuristic devices, which enable the researcher to go beyond the data.”

The data collected including transcriptions, voice recordings and institutional demographic files were stored in either an encrypted and password protected computer files or locked in a file cabinet in my office to protect the confidentiality of the study participants while conducting the analysis of the data. Based upon existing theories associated with stereotype threat, critical race theory, and white racial framing research questions were developed. These questions influenced the structure of the data collected as well as my coding system. According to Charmaz (as cited in Weston, et al., 2001, p. 384) a logical deductive approach using several theoretical perspectives was employed to search for constructs that would provide a deeper understanding of the issues linked to African American males academic achievement. Using a tentative model of reflection outlined by (Weston, et al. 2001) I developed meta-level themes, themes and sub-themes from the semi-structured interviews to come to a deeper level of understanding of the complex systemic and social issues African American males navigate within the educational system.

Conclusion

There are a small number of scholars engaged in conducting and reporting on research studies from the lived experiences and perspectives of African American males focused on the difficulties they have encounter attempting to navigate the educational system. Harper’s (2006, 2009, and 2012) studies have indicated, we must broaden our perspectives of African American males to include research that drills deeper into the

issues experienced by these students. We must analyze performances of high academic achievers from this population attempting to understand what skills or factors have enabled them to successfully navigate higher education regardless of their socioeconomic status. By the same standard, we must also analyze and drill deeper into the average to low academic performer to ascertain where their issues align with the high performers as well as investigate and determine what differences exist (systemic or otherwise) which leads to low academic success rates. It is important for scholars, politicians and parents to consider all of the factors impacting African American male's success not just the students who struggle with navigating the educational system. By including the voices and perceptions of African American males both high and low academic achievers perhaps we can develop a better understanding of the issues. Once the issues have been vetted by all stakeholders (including black male students) and viable options weighed; appropriate measures must be implemented designed to eradicate the educational attainment gap of African American males as they work to navigate and engage an educational system that has not typically reached out with open arms to embrace them.

In the next chapter, I discuss the results and findings of this study based upon comparing and contrasting my results with the findings of previous studies using my theoretical framework outlined early in this chapter. I inserted the voices and lived experiences of the African American males interviewed to bring clarity to their experiences engaging and navigating the educational system. These findings were used in the final chapter to continue to build upon the discussion from the previous chapter by using my research questions. In addition, I included the voices and lived experiences of

the African American males interviewed to answer these questions and solidify the results. Also discussed are the potential shortcomings of the study and suggestions for future studies on underrepresented or low resourced groups. Additionally, I propose adjusting the academic advising strategies currently in place to centralize and streamline this process for first and second year students. The new advising framework would include in-depth meetings between the advisors and students early in the matriculation process. In addition to this centralized approach, recommendations are offered regarding assigning mentors for first generation and students enrolling at the university from low resourced secondary educational systems. With the changing demographics across the United States, I strongly believe the institution must strategically develop programs and services based upon the potential needs of the changing demographic of our students and faculty. It seems to me this institution must prepare itself futuristically to positively impact the student's lives prior to and after matriculation. Efforts should be made by the faculty and staff to provide a high impact, high quality educational experiences that engage critical thinking and analytical skills that will be needed in the future. By the same token, the institution must take a stronger stance on diversifying the campus which must include diversifying the faculty ranks bringing it in line with the student population using natural succession planning of the university as a means to accomplish this change.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In the early 1700, Willie Lynch was brought in to teach Virginia's slave owners how to control their slaves. Lynch's theory on controlling the slaves was developed using three concepts: jealousy, doubt and terror to instill fear and implement control over the slaves.

Willie Lynch Theory

Introduction

The historical positioning of African Americans (particularly males) in the United States is well documented in the literature. Viewed as property to be used, mutilated, bred, sold and managed at the pleasure of the slave owner and his family; it was unlawful to teach a slave to read, write, or be educated in most parts of the United States. The Willie Lynch theory on how to manage and control the slaves was woven into the fabric of American society over 400 years ago and in various ways influenced many of the laws and biases instituted to maintain the dominant power structure established by White Americans. This structure has been passed down through generations of both White and Black Americans and is so ingrained into our daily existence many people never realize or deny it exists. The manner by which Black males have been historically positioned in the educational system is based upon a hidden curriculum that favors the dominant White culture and needs to be both, recognized and dismantled in order for this group (as well

as other racial groups) to begin to close the educational achievement gap and advance academically and professionally across our nation.

Prior to continuing, it is important to note the findings derived from this study and information shared do not constitute an all encompassing view of the issues encountered by all African American males. This study serves as a snap shot of the issues highlighted by the participants in this study, comparing the findings and themes against previous scholarly findings by inserting the African American males lived experiences and voices into what was previously reported looking for similarities and differences. These similarities and more specifically differences are scrutinized further using my theoretical framework in conjunction with this study's findings to either support or modify previous conclusions and provide a potential gateway which can be used to develop programs and services that actually have a positive impact on the overall academic success of African American males. The intent was never to generalize my finding for broad application to all black males. The focus was to introduce the lived experiences and voices of the African American males from their perspectives into the scholarly conversations. Based on a previously conducted literature review, I found the voices and perspectives of African American males missing from a large portion of the scholarly work. I firmly believe in order to create a climate of change and prosperity for this population of students, we must understand their perceived experiences and how these perceptions influence their ability to engage and successfully navigate the educational system.

Participants

The data collection phase of this study produced 11 interviews, 10 individual sessions and one focus group session with 5 of the 10 individual participants from the individual sessions. Prior to soliciting African American males to participate in this study, the researcher conducted a pilot study of the interview instrument with two Black male students who did not participate in the study to determine clarity and understanding of question composition. During this pilot study phase, the students were also asked to provide feedback on their comfort level and if there were questions that needed to be excluded, modified, or added to the study. Both indicated no issues existed with clarity, comfort or understanding of the interview questions. In order to participate in the study each participant had to be enrolled full-time as a degree seeking student at the university.

Table 1. Study Participants

Participants (pseudonym)	Age	Classification	Major	Community Environment	GPA Range
Keith	22	Senior	Information Systems	Urban	2.9 – 3.4
Johnathan	22	Senior	History	Rural	2.6 - 3.2
Randy	19	Sophomore	Sociology/African American Studies	Rural	3.3 – 3.8
Joshua	19	Sophomore	Finance/Accounting	Rural	3.4 – 4.0
Mickey	19	Sophomore	Broadcast Cinema	Urban	3.0 – 3.6
Bill	20	Junior	Music/Teaching Fellow	Urban	2.8 – 3.4
Terry	20	Junior	Business	Urban	3.0 – 3.6
Jerrell	19	Sophomore	Business	Urban	2.3 –

					2.9
Robert	19	Sophomore	Community and Therapeutic Recreation/Entrepreneurship	Rural/Urban	2.2 – 2.8
Martin	21	Junior	Political Science	Urban	2.3 – 2.9

The study participants engaged in a pre-interview meeting with the researcher to discuss the nature and purpose of this study in addition to signing consent documents. Participants were apprised that taking part in this study was voluntary and they had the right to stop the session at any time they became uncomfortable and they also had the right to refuse answering any questions posed during the interview session. The participants were also provided with an opportunity to ask questions about this study and how information gathered during the interview sessions would be used, presented and secured to maintain their confidentiality. Eight of ten individuals interviewed voiced concerns about the possibility of being identified by someone reading this dissertation. They were assured their names would not appear in the document and the taped segments of the interviews as well as other identifying documents would be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. These African American males came from a variety of backgrounds ranging from large urban secondary education systems to extremely rural small town secondary systems. One quick observation from the pre-interview meetings was the concern a majority of the students voiced related to how the information gathered would be presented. Their concerns were related to how information from interviews with African American males were not typically discussed in a positive light and they did

not want to participate in a study that reflected negatively on their success as students and young men seeking to become professionals in their chosen fields of study.

The individuals who volunteered to participate in this study were divided between rural (3 participants), urban (6 participants) and a mixed community (1 participant) environment in their formative years. Their academic classification range was five sophomores, three juniors and two fifth year seniors. Of the 10 individual participants half of this number agreed to engage in a focus group interview session. During the focus group interview session each of the participants was provided an opportunity to respond to a set of questions developed based upon the responses derived from the individual interview sessions and a few pre-determined questions addressing the three research questions associated with this study.

The researcher determined the best approach to presenting the findings from this study was through the use of focus group and individual interview themes that responded directly to the study research questions.

Institutional History

The University of Southeastern America (USA) was founded in the late 1800 as an institution dedicated to educating “White” women. This historical review of the institution specifically focuses on how the institution viewed and situated African American’s related to their involvement with the institution as well as the roles they served in on campus. According to Trelease (2004), during that time period (late 1800s) there were no public institutions of higher education dedicated to educating White women in this state. “Institutions that offered opportunities for women were often private

in nature and too expensive for some students; the public higher education institutions were for White men only or were stated to be primitive institutions for Blacks and Indians which were co-educational” (p. 5). The President of the college during these years coined this phrase: “Educate a man, and you educate an individual; educate a woman and you educate a family” (p. 5). Although designated as a women’s college, the institution began allowing White men to attend summer school in the early 1900s and take masters level coursework in the 1920s. Trelease (2004) stated by the “mid-50s males constituted 40% of the summer session enrollment and 24% of the masters degree recipients” (p. 282). Due to the *Brown v Board* decision forcing the desegregation of schools in 1956; USA denied all men applying for admission/access to the university including those previously enrolled in graduate programs and summer school. This ban on males enrolled at the university would last until 1962 when the restrictions were removed and campus reopened with 32% of the men enrolling in graduate school (Trelease, 2004). He also indicated that another major reason for trustees banning males from campus was to “guard against the introduction of Black male students” (p. 279) and having them “fraternizing with White female classmates at USA” (p. 280). In addition to banning male enrollment, USA and other system institutions of higher education established stricter admissions standards and for the first time ever required entering students to take an entrance examinations. These standards were supposedly implemented “to prevent an avalanche of ill-prepared black students from being admitted to the university” (p. 279). Based upon the research these standards were applied broadly to anyone seeking admission to the university in an attempt to avoid federal

repercussions, however, the public state institutions (including USA) were subsequently charged in the early 1970's for failing to abide by the Supreme Court's desegregation mandate. This civil rights case would last more than 20 years at a substantial financial cost to the university for failure to make significant strides to desegregate (however, it was noted that USA's efforts exceeded those of other institutions). Trelease also noted that had it not been for the intervention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the case against these institutions would have been dropped with a change of US Presidents due to a lack of interest in race relations by the new administrations. These issues (integrations of all schools receiving federal assistance) within this state and its public institutions of higher education as well as institutions in other states prompted the Office of Civil Rights court actions. It was the NAACP's dedication and tenacity to keep the pressure on that finally lead to a quota agreement in 1981 that called for black campuses to be upgraded while predominantly white institutions were required to increase their minority (primarily Black student) enrollment to 10.6%. Trelease (2004) noted that this agreement spearheaded by a Senator "was non-binding for the traditionally white campuses" (p. 312). This seems to indicate that White universities could either choose to comply with the agreement or continue to operate as normal without fear of any repercussions.

Race Relations - USA has a history of walking a thin line related to race relations and how people of color were allowed access to certain facilities (e.g. protocols mandated by the state and educational system on meetings and social gatherings involving racial mixing, pedagogical efforts, and engagement in civil rights protests), admissions based

upon federal court mandates, and social pressures on the university not to conform based upon the popular oppressive southern Jim Crow ideology. This ideology (Jim Crow) played a major role in how the university integrated in 1956. Prior to the mid-1950s, USA was involved in two issues involving African Americans. The first was related to the use of or access to campus facilities (e.g., Library, Aycock Auditorium) and how Black and White students and faculty were to conduct themselves when use of these venues brought them into close proximity with one another. In the case of the library, students and faculty members from two local Historically Black Institutions in the community requested occasional access to the facility to access information needed to complete their assignments or scholarly work. By state law and higher education system regulations at that time allowing racial mixing in this space was prohibited. After consultation with the system President, this practice (allowing black students and faculty to use the campus library) was permitted to continue. The second issue involved racial mixing at functions held in the on-campus Auditorium (considered a public building) and other locations on campus. According to Trelease (2004) faculty and students wanted to sponsor events (interracial) on campus, the Chancellor was supportive of these events as long as they strictly adhered to state and system requirements. The regulations provided for events that were academic in nature, participants were permitted to sit anywhere they wished, however once the event became social or open to the public, (e.g., pre/post-meeting socials, or dinner) the attendees (regardless of status: faculty, staff, students or general public) had to be separated by race into different areas or in the instances of concert series assigned seating in designated areas. Racial mixing at social functions was

illegal and not in compliance with the university system's rules and regulations. These regulations were overbearing for many students and faculty. It was noted that some faculty met privately in homes and other locations around the city with their African American counterparts from the city's two historically black colleges. These gatherings provided opportunities for faculty members to exchange research ideas and work collaboratively (in secret) on projects of similar interest (Trelease, 2004). Despite the intense racial climate that existed during the late 1950s and 1960s, some USA faculty and students found ways to support and engage in scholarly and the civil rights movement with their African American colleagues.

Servitude/Employment - African Americans have always played a role on USA's campus initially as "cooks, maids, janitors and handymen most of whom lived in the vicinity of the campus" (p. 35). The services they provided were for the benefit of White people, predominantly women who were pursuing intellectual advancement which in turn would benefit White males who were being taught by the female graduates of this institution. African American workers arrived on campus twenty-five years after the end of slavery and tended to the physical upkeep and appearance of the campus as well as performing all of the menial labor needed to maintain the campus for the White female students, faculty and administrators (Trelease, 2004, p. 315).

It was not until the late 50's, 76 years after opening its doors for business, that USA would hire its first African American in academia and even then it was only as an assistant in one of the campus biology laboratories. This individual would hold that position for eleven years prior to being elevated to faculty status serving as an instructor.

USA's first Black faculty appointment occurred in the late 1960's by the school of nursing (Trelease, 2004), "which was known for working to recruit faculty and students of color" (p. 314). According to Trelease (2004) in 1969, a committee appointed by the Chancellor (charged in 1968) reported the university needed to intensify efforts to recruit black students and provide a welcoming environment once these students were admitted to the institution. It was also noted in this report, the university (prior to the report release date) had only one black faculty member and encouraged the institution to actively pursue more scholars of color; by 1969 there were six black faculty members (one was a professor at one of the state's Historically Black Colleges and Universities [HBCUs]). Over fifty years later USA has experienced great strides in African American students applying and subsequently enrolling at the university. However, the recruitment and retention of African American faculty has continued to significantly lag behind the student percentages as well as the percentages of their counterparts within the faculty ranks. Today the recruitment, retention, mentoring and advancement of faculty of color remains a main topic of discussion by students of color and advisory committees charged to review matters of this nature. With the continued demographic shift in the student population, the university is being called upon to modify and increase recruitment efforts regarding faculty of color. The university must also come to grips and determine what it wants to look like across all demographic marker for students and faculty in the not too distant future. As the university continues to diversify itself, the types of academic support services and students extracurricular activities offered must be adjusted and in some cases totally redesigned to meet the needs of the changing demographics and

expectations of the faculty, students and staff in order to engage in critical thinking and learning outcomes needed to compete for employment in the rapidly changing global market.

Arrival of African American Students - The first two African American female students admitted to USA were housed on the first floor wing of one dormitory and had a private bathroom and the entire first floor to themselves; they lived in isolation with the exception of classes (Trelease, 2004). These living conditions continued for a number of years and changed not because it was morally wrong, instead because White students were upset at their overcrowded living conditions and demanded access to the unsued wing of the dormitory (Trelease, 2004). It was also noted that the isolated living requirement changed as the black students advanced in classification status. The acting Chancellor at that time was said to favor 'racial segregation' called upon the university community to guard "against extreme attitudes and conduct especially... undue cordiality and exaggerated humanitarianism towards the new students" (p. 280). This same Chancellor also stood before the student body and stated these Black students (who were said to be in attendance) were admitted because the institution was forced to do so (Trelease, 2004). The Chancellor's statement seem to imply that the Black students were not trustworthy or qualified to enroll at the university and should not be provided special consideration or undue attention to ensure their success. The acting Chancellor's comments also seemed to indicate the university was forced into the reality of integration by the legal system, and he was charged by the trustees to ensure African American males would not have direct contact with White female students by implementing a

policy that prohibited male enrollment (regardless of race) at the university that lasted for six years. There were other members of the university community who resisted welcoming African American students to campus. One such member was the institution's admission director who was said to call black applicants "Supreme Court Models" (Trelease, 2004, p. 280) indicating they would not have gained admission to the university without the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v Board* educational ruling. Despite individuals like the one just mentioned, the university also had a growing number of faculty and students who were noted to have supported desegregation, the recruitment and admission of students of color, and the appointing of more African American faculty at the university.

Early Male Students - As previously noted White men were allowed to attend summer school classes, but were not allowed to enroll in the undergraduate programs fall or spring in the early 1900s. They were also permitted to attend graduate school early in the history of USA, without much fanfare during the formative years. *Brown v Board* changed admission practices and selectivity at USA as well as other institutions of higher education within this state. This time period was an emotional powder keg due to the Civil Rights Movement including the student sit-ins which were being staged across American at lunch counters that served only White people. This movement was felt by numerous colleges both Black and White as students and scholars were moved to advocate for equal treatment of all people regardless of their race. By the early 1960s, it was apparent USA was about to undergo another major identity shift and become a co-educational institution serving both male and female undergraduates. In 1969, USA

graduated its first undergraduate African American male in the history of the institution. While conducting research for this study, I realized that in my 20 plus year affiliation with this university, I could not recall hearing anyone mention the name of the first African American male undergraduate (Larry McAdoo '69) believed to have graduated from USA. It would seem given the difficulties of that time period and the 50th anniversary of the historic events associated with the Civil Rights Movement, the university would have attempted to honor the first African American male undergraduate to graduate from this institution .

From the 1970s through the early 1990s USA experienced tremendous growth and change. In the late 1970's, the Student Government Association elected its first African American president who also happened to be male. The enrollment of African American as well as other underrepresented students continued to climb steadily throughout this twenty year time period. However, when looking at the admission trends for African American males, it is interesting that during one ten year span the institution averaged (based upon information contained in the institutional research database) admitting approximately 72-78 Black male students per year which was significantly lower than Black females who averaged between 350-400 per year. Recalling the change to admission standards instituted in the mid 1950s and USA's trustees desire to limit the ability and access of African American males to attend school with White females, one cannot help but question if the policies and mindsets have changed that drastically over the sixty-nine years since the admissions standards were implemented. In recent years, 2005 to present day, the admission numbers for African American males have more than

doubled, however they still significantly lag behind the admission numbers of African American females by a ratio of approximately 4 to 1. The percentages associated with the admission rates across all demographic groups throughout this time period for the university appear to be extremely consistent both by race and gender. Although a full statistical analysis was not performed, a future study should be conducted examining the admission trends and percentages looking at the probability of consistency between data over the last 20 to 30 years.

Advising Issues - In the early 1960 students and faculty called for a better advising system that included the expertise of the faculty in each of the given fields of study (Trelease, 2004). For the last 60 years, USA's academic advising efforts have been reviewed and continually questioned by its students, faculty and staff. Even though the advising program has been through several iterations from an individualized school by school approach, to individual student advisings sessions, to group advising, and finally a mixed advising approach of individualized and group advising sessions, best practices that meet the needs of students and faculty are still in question today. The institution has employed a centralized approach to advising where students were advised by a core group of advisors across multiple disciplines upon their matriculation to college. This process was later revised as a supplement to advising that occurred within each of the schools and the College of Arts and Sciences servicing students who were unable to meet with their assigned academic advisors or students who were undeclared and therefore not assigned a faculty advisor. Currently, advising is still one of the largest issues students complain about on USA's campus. Students in the freshmen and sophomore classes

complain most often about the limited time spent with their undergraduate advisors and the difficulty experienced learning how to use and navigate the online advising portal to ensure they are meeting or exceeding the requirements needed to graduate. Juniors and seniors often discuss the issues they encountered as a freshmen or sophomores attempting to learn the university class registration and degree tracking system. Advising for minority students tends to follow the same trends as other students. For the African American male students these trends and issues will be discussed later in this chapter with potential changes and modifications being discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation.

White Racial Frame

Based upon the narrative reflections of the African American males who participated in this study, themes were generated that spoke to their lived experiences in the following areas: (1) White Racial Framing; (2) Stereotyping (3) Pre College Experiences; (4) College Experiences; and (5) Classroom Experiences. Prior to engaging these themes from a conceptual basis to build the relevancy for the inclusion of African American male's voices in literature related to their academic success, I believe a foundational framework must be established. I selected Feagin's (2010) theory on White Racial Frame based upon the concept of the hidden curriculum and systemic racism's impact on people of color across a number of society's economic, political and educational issues. As Feagin (2010) noted "racial oppression was not added later on in the development of this society, but was the foundation of the original colonial and U.S. social systems and it remains as a foundation to the present day" (p. vii). He continues

on to posit the dominant racial frame is taught across and within every walk of life we encounter in our daily lives from the playgrounds to schools, corporations, legal systems, and all forms of media and politics. My focus and examination of these issues related to the lived experiences and voices of African American males was to understand from their perspective what they encounter and overcome to persist and graduate from college.

The entitlement afforded White students is seldom discussed or mentioned in reports and findings associated with their success and ability to navigate educational systems across the U.S. In direct contrast to the findings related to White students success, there are numerous reports, findings, and studies espousing the struggles of African Americans (particularly males) to achieve the same level of success as they attempt to engage a system that was not designed to accommodate Black or other students of color. The White racial frame as defined by Feagin (2010) is:

[T]he broad, persisting and dominant racial frame that has rationalized racial oppression and inequity impacting all U.S. institutions...This oppressive racial frame of the dominant group can be seen in all phases of society today from our schools to our political leaders (p. ix).

The position from which research is framed and presented plays a critical role related to White racial framing. For example, we witnessed White racial framing at work and its impact on African American students during the early developmental stages of the dual (Black and White) educational system in the *Roberts v. City of Boston* case in 1849. In the Roberts' case, the court upheld the city schools' right to deny attendance based on race and the fact there were schools (for Blacks only) that Robert's children could attend which were supposedly better suited to address their needs related to achieving success

educationally. The fact that Black children had to walk past 5 schools for White children just to get to their school was of no consequence, the thought of the courts was as long as the Black students had comparable facilities to those attended by the White students, the law was being adhered too. There was no mention of the quality of the education available, the main focus seems to only consider physical buildings and the access to an education regardless of its quality. Thirty-seven years later, the Roberts' judgment served as the precedent case for the passing of the 1886 Plessy ruling supporting separate but equal transportation accommodations and was applied broadly to support the same ideology in reference to schooling accommodations for Black and White children. Even with the passing of the Morrill Acts (I & II) which created the framework for numerous Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HCBUs) to be established, the equality between White and Black schools was far from commensurate with one another. Researchers have noted that the funding, facilities and opportunities for the HCBUs were limited due to the disproportionate allocation of the resources going to Predominately White institutions (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009). In the last decade a number of HCBUs have filed suits within their states in part due to the gross underfunding and educational inequities their institutions have endured over numerous years. Again, we see evidence of the White racial frame of dominance coming into play and influencing the outcome of how successful HCBUs have been at educating the Black population. This was especially true considering the majority of these institutions were managed by White Presidents during their early years. According to Harper et al., (2009), the educational materials and textbooks selected by these Presidents for use were often out

dated and only provided information on significant contributions of the dominant racial group. There was no mention of the contributions made by African Americans related to the development of America. The systemic propagation of the White racial frame can be tracked throughout all levels of the educational system from secondary education to the pursuit of terminal degrees across a variety of fields of study and scholarly endeavours.

Pulling from the interviews of 10 participants one of the common themes from the interview sessions from undergraduate African American male's perspectives, agrees with the notion that White racial framing is still in existence today.

Systemic Issues - Johnathan's statement comparing the educational system to a tube of toothpaste speaks to an underlying current or method of teaching which takes a monolithic approach and fails to account for the experiences of a diverse population of students on campus which differs from the typical dominant race perspective:

If you squeeze the tube the only thing one would expect to get is toothpaste. Teachers have been taught to teach in a specific way instead of adjusting their teaching methods; perhaps instead of teaching to test they should make their lesson plans more relevant to the experiences of the students. If the (Black) students don't have the same toothpaste (experiences) in them that the teachers are teaching they become disengaged. . . . they (the teachers) need to buy some new toothpaste and make it more diverse for all students.

Perhaps it is not overtly displayed, however, Black males expressed a belief that the system was stacked against them creating barriers and an atmosphere in which they are constantly striving to navigate and achieve success with little to no guidance or assistance. Keith noted:

I've experienced a lot of invisible barriers, you know there are some things or some difficulties that are set up within the university that I believe are sometimes placed without you even knowing. Um I know particularly for myself as a freshman coming in as a black male you know there were probably 20, 30 or 40 (Black freshman) guys there at the time that I knew them and we were all really close, but nobody really reached out to us about as far as tutoring, or mentoring or things like that kinda like what you would expect when you come to college. Its pretty much you know you are paying to go to school so a lot of my friends paid that first or second semester to fail.

Keith highlighted one of the changes needed that could assist African American males with successfully navigating and achieve their educational goals. Capaldi, Lombardi & Yellen (2006); and Carey (2005) indicated in their research that Black males enter college inadequately prepared to navigate the academic rigors of higher education. Just as Tinto (2004) indicated "black males and other students of color could overcome institutional shortcomings if proper systems and programs were in place to transition them into higher education" (p. 14). The university's academic support and students affairs offices should be notified and engage students who enter college from underrepresented areas or Title I schools with significant financial need to assist them with their matriculation into college. Other studies conducted by Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek 2004; and Fleming and Berger & Milem as cited in Harper et al. 2004 indicate African American males have a higher affinity and sense of connectedness with the institutions that devote time engaging them early in their transition to college. It was also found that students who are engaged by the university are retained and remain connected to their academic goal and aspirations. By providing these students with early intervention and monitoring the university may be able to increase their retention and

graduation rates thereby closing the achievement gap that currently exist between African American males and all other demographic group.

Teacher Expectations - Palmer et al., (2010) suggested that African American males have the “poorest educational outcomes” than any other demographic groups in America (p. 107). Harvey & Harvey (2005); Moore (2006) and Levin, Belfield, Muenning, & Rouse (2007), indicated that America has not responded to and failed to support African American males at their educational institutions which has had a negative impact on the persistence and graduation of African American males. To further enhance this view, a number of the study participants commented on witnessing shocked or surprised expressions on the faces of their professors and class peers when they participate in classroom discussions and critically engage the course content. Both Noguera (2003) and Haycock (2006) discussed the negative impact teachers have on African American students. According to their findings many teachers expect black males to perform poorly in class, therefore they elect to not engage these students in classroom activities. Joshua comments supports these findings:

I would say as far as my advisors and professors it isn't racial conflict but they have lower expectations since I'm black. If I do something that an average students should do, they are profound or they are excited to see that I can do that when it should just be the regular thing.

Mickey's experiences and views are similar to Joshua in respect to the reaction of his professors when he responds to queries in class. “I have seen instances where there is shock that you know more than what they thought you would know”. For Randy, the

concern was “not being pushed to or engaged by his teachers or professors unless he intentionally made himself known to them.” Based upon his experience, if he does not “initiate the relationship, professors and teachers will not provide guidance or help when it is needed.” Caperton (2010) discussed the concept of a second America related to the educational crises facing young men of color in schools. This concept reflects a sentiments of low teacher and societal expectations of academic success for African American males and other students of color. Terry’s experiences seems to mirror those of Joshua and Randy related to the support received from his professors and supports Caperton’s concept. Terry stated:

You just have to motivate yourself, find motivation to succeed in your classwork and homework and everything because they [Professors] won’t, they rarely reach out a hand and, say ok I see you struggling what can I do to help you, what can I do to help get your grades up?

Affirmation of Experiences - According to Ladson-Billings (1998) the use of “voice” to name one’s reality is important from a critical race theory perspective. Providing the study participants with the ability to listen to each other discuss their experiences; created a support network from which they could engage with one another about commonalities experienced on campus even though they were in different majors and schools. Coming together to make sense of their environment and shared experiences regardless of their degree track, served as a moment of affirmation for the focus group participants. For these students, the affirming moment was realizing their individual issues were not experienced in a vacuum, there were other African American

males who had experienced similar realities associated with their journey through the educational system. I also believe based upon their conversations, head nods and physical reactions during the interviews, there was the realization that the experiences were not associated with their academic status as a low or high achiever, the expectations were the same and most often were the result of race. This was also noted in the scholarly research (Charles, Fischer, Mooney, & Massey 2009; Cokley 2003; Fries-Britt 1997; and Harper 2009a as cited in Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowen, Ingram & Platt 2001), that academically proficient African American males were viewed by their professors with suspicion and doubt regarding their intellectual competence and their contributions to the classroom experience were often ignored. The continued questioning of Black males intellectual ability provides further confirmation of the existence of White racial framing as defined (Feagin 2010) and how it continues to influence preceptions of African American males intellectual abilities in academia as well as the world at large.

Stereotyping

According to Abrahams (1970), “perhaps the greatest problem of blacks in White America – that they are consistently misunderstood because of stereotypic attitudes on the part of Whites” (p. 3). “The pressures Black students feel from an educational perspective when attempting to disprove negative stereotypes (academic inferiority) related to other demographic groups could lead to the construction of barriers which inhibits engagement both in and outside of the classrooms” (Museus, 2008, p. 570). In many respects stereotyping impacts not only African American male students social interactions but it also influences how these students view their contributions inside the

classrooms (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In the Steele & Aronson (1995) study, once race or gender become factors associated with any group's ability to perform well on tests or their overall academic performance, achievement levels become suppressed due to the pressure/fear validating reported performance results based upon their test outcome. When applying this theory to standardized test performance, once the stress level increases due to societal views of a particular race or gender academic abilities/performance deteriorates; which has been tested and proven true not only for African American males but for all racial demographic groups tested (Steele & Aronson 1995; & Steele, C., 2010). To generalize this effect or any other and apply it broadly to all African American males seems to be a shortsighted approach to a larger issue implemented hundreds of years ago when slavery ruled and the oppression of the Black race was universally accepted. Harper (2006, 2011, & 2012), noted that high achieving African American males have developed skills or a mindset that allows them to not only successfully engage the educational system but thrive in the rigors of academia. These students may have developed some type of coping mechanism or simply refuse to accept stereotypical expectations of their performance in the classroom.

Police - For the Black males participating in this study, when considering the effects of stereotyping they provided a wide range of responses. Keith, Bill and Joshua for instance, immediately associated stereotyping with the campus police. According to Keith:

Here at USA it's become almost acceptable if we get a crime alert by default we automatically, it seems as if the description usually is you know a black male 5'8"

you know wearing a black hoodie or something like that or sneakers and what's funny is you know not very often is that obtained and it usually happens right around the police station with is funny. It's sad to say that it's almost become acceptable in every instance there is a gunman on USA's campus or somebody has just been robbed and you know 9 out of 10 times you can place that description on a black male even without seeing them. I feel like we have this target on our backs if you are in the wrong place at the wrong time someone could call the police and say I found the guy that you're looking for just based off of that same description.

Like Keith, Joshua worries about the "descriptions released by the police department and how damaging it would be if someone accused the wrong person." According to the research, schools are sites where African American males are stigmatized as opposed to places of intellectual growth, hope and opportunity (Noguera 2003). Joshua stated:

Personally, I have not had a police incident on campus but a lot of the police alerts that I get to my email and my cell phone do categorize me. Even if I don't have anything to do with it, 9 times out of 10 it's a black male, six feet or above, my height, my weight even if I didn't have anything to do with it anyone could look at the description, someone could point the finger and say I'm the one that did it. So as far as that I think there are a lot of stereotypes and as far as the crimes that are committed on campus or close to the campus automatically you assume it was a six foot black guy.

Bill's issues related to being stereotyped and dealing with the police are slightly different from the other two in that his issues are with the city police department. He describes his experiences in this manner:

I have actually been stopped by the police three times (nervous laugh) I feel like the first time he claimed that I turned left at the red light and I felt that I turned before the light changed to red and I did happen to have five other people who

were African American males in the car. I drive a minivan so I can hold a lot of people. The second time I did a rolling stop. He was right to give me a ticket. I didn't feel like he had to be as serious or harsh about it because it wasn't a big intersection, it was within a neighborhood. A predominantly African American neighborhood, he was white and did his job but he could have been more lenient.

The third incident with the police for Bill ended up with him having his car searched and personal belonging lying out on the sidewalk. These incidents created a negative or hostile environment for Bill who commented that he now “drives well below the posted speed limit to avoid being stopped, and had considered going home and withdrawing from school.”

We must work to understand what the issues are for those students who struggle to manage the academic rigors and other pressures (e.g., financial, social and psychological) that may prohibit their success. It stands to reason that there are multiple factors (e.g., teachers, parents, school systems, community, and peers) that influence the success of African American male students today. Furthermore, consideration must also be given to laws, policies, scholarly reports and their overall impact to understand the issues African Americans males wrestle with daily attempting to succeed in the educational system. Baber, Aronson and Melton (2005) discussed the fractured identities of Black males and the devastating impact stereotyping has on how they perceive themselves in the classroom at PWI's. These students are engaged in an internal battle daily attempting to not only understand how to best navigate their college experience, but also how to positively change how they are viewed on campus by their professors and peers. For some of the participants in this study finding someone (a mentor) in whom

they could trust to help them navigate the academic requirements of their degrees was extremely important for achieving the success academically.

Social Settings - Stereotyping and stereotypical behaviors were discussed throughout the study participant's and focus group's interviews. 8 of 10 study participants commented on how they thought African American males were stereotyped and made to appear as criminals on campus. One study participant (Mickey) discussed how special cultural nights in the cafeteria particularly Fried Chicken Wednesdays and having "White friends" commenting that "all Black people love chicken impacted him." Although the comment was stated with no intent to create ill feelings, Mickey still "felt some kind of way about the comment even though he loved chicken as it was a staple in his diet growing up". These types of incidents if not addressed could lead to the creation of barriers which inhibit dialogue across race and culture.

Randy's reflections on his lived experiences in dealing with this issue were couched in a different light. He stated:

I think when BAC throws events (I think this could be viewed as very stereotypical *whispered to himself*) it is very stereotypical towards the black community because the staff is predominantly black. So I know a lot of their programs are really kinda going into the interest of the African American students, so I think that's a little stereo-typical cause they are only attracting a certain target group. If we are a diverse school, I believe that it should target the interest of a lot of different people speaking in that perspective. But I know there are other organizations that other people of other races or ethnicities or nationalities who have made programs that are in the interest of their particular target audience, so I think that we need to start creating more programs especially for African Americans to use to spark their interest that is a little bit more diverse. I think that doesn't reflect me because I think that kind of alters and limits the character that I am and doesn't let me develop and grow as an...who wants to really advance and experience things that go way beyond the bubble that I am in as an African American male.

The final incident of being stereotyped involved Robert who invited friends over:

I had a bunch of friends over and the girl that was over there see we are all Cool with each other. She's white and we were trying to find something on tv and she turned straight to BET and she said here you go it's you all's channel and I was like what makes you think we didn't want to watch ESPN or Lifetime or you know something of that nature? She took it as a joke, she was like I was just joking but I didn't find it as a joke, she could have been kicked out.

Steele & Aronson (1995) tested their stereotype theory using all races and genders to determine if in fact their findings were both repeatable and valid regardless of any demographic markers. Randy's comments aligned with those of Steele and Aronson (1995) on stereotyping when he pulled every race, ethnicity and culture into the conversation by pointing out a very important aspect of this theory, "stereotyping can actually occur within any race, ethnicity or culture and was not confined to any specific one". In his response, Randy also made a critical observation related to the importance of "breaking down and crossing the cultural borders that separate us and contribute to many of the social issues we experience in life". He did not "want his life defined by how others perceive him to be, instead he preferred to reserve ownership related to defining who he is and how others will see and know the man he has become."

Academic Settings - Stereotype threat also appears as a result of the fear of being wrong and perceived as not having the intellect to be in the classroom therefore they elect to say nothing. By noting they were only one of a few African American students in the class, I believe race played a role in the decisions these students made to remain silent in their large lecture classes. Stereotype threat was also introduced into the mix as the fear

to speak in front of the class. By remaining silent, these students never have to worry about being told they are wrong and feeling embarrassed, they elect to remove the possibility of threat through silence. Mickey stated:

As far as big lecture classes, I am kinda not known by my professor or my classmates unless I have a friend or two in there. Only because one, the environment and two there are not that many black students in there that I can connect with so it makes it kinda hard as far as to relate with them [other students] and my professor. My professor already struggles with trying to know names and stuff so I also put myself down because I don't go to see him as much as I should. As far as my classmates are concerned it's just hard to relate being [there are] few black people in there.

Robert also talked about stereotyping and how it served as a mental barrier in his instance. He stated, "I attempt to figure out the perceptions of my classmates regarding where I fit in the classroom dynamic while understanding I will have to work harder just to attain what the next man has, just to earn what I should get". He also experienced being stereotyped walking to class early one morning:

I saw a White lady walking toward me on the sidewalk and moved over to give her room because the sidewalk was narrow. She saw me, crossed the street and walked around a car like she was going somewhere else. I looked back just to see if I was right and she came right back over and kept moving. I said let me go to class, I've got other things to focus on.

Jarrell expressed having a similar experience when walking a White female student to her car after class. They were laughing and talking when a White woman looked at the female student and asked if she was ok? Jarrell stated "My White friend

says yes I'm fine and the woman says I just wanted to make sure and the lady looks at me rolls her eyes at me and keeps walking. She was a faculty member". Jarrell's experience based upon the perception of the White female faculty member was only one of many incidents of this nature occurring on college campuses across the nation. This form of micro-aggression only serves to further alienate and create feelings of distrust across racial borders. Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, (2000) stated that while little is known about micro-aggressions "this subtle form of racism has a dramatic impact on the lives of African Americans" (p. 60). Micro-aggressions which are micro to other, and not confined to those experiencing them can be both intentional and unintentional in nature "stemming from the individual's unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitutes verification of black inferiority" (Davis, 1989 as cited in Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 60). It is racial climates of this nature that need to be interrogated and their impact on African American males understood related to their success in the classroom and social settings. Another possibility could be the notion that interracial relationships regardless of whether the individuals are dating or just friends are still not widely accepted in the South and the faculty member was making her position known. Perhaps it is associated with how the media "broadly disseminates" the negative information about one's group, and how that information is perceived and used to form opinions about a specific group or groups of people. One such example is the positioning of black males as dangerous and not to be trusted due to the preponderance of information released by the authorities to the campus community in which 90% (if not more) involved African American males. Whatever the case may be, the perceptions of African

American males at the undergraduate level of the university is anything but welcoming, embracing or caring for this underrepresented group of young men.

A number of the study participants voiced that although campus was very diverse, there was still a lot of work that needed to be accomplished around the perceptions people have of African American males in the classroom as well as in the university community. These views are difficult to dispel due to the images in the media of African American males as criminals, or reports detailing academic, social and economic issues they are faced with overcoming. hooks (2013), noted “the most powerful teachers of White supremacy are the mass media and our schools inasmuch as these are the sites whereby stereotypes, misconceptions and fears are cited and ingrained into our minds” (pp. 12-13).

Pre-College Experiences

Harper & Griffin (2011) noted there are academically high achieving African American males who come from varying backgrounds and socioeconomic status who are successful despite the educational system. Noguera (2003) also reported a similar finding that African American males who have successfully navigated the educational system have done so “in spite of and not because of the schools they attended” (p.435). One could also assume there are Black males from upper middle class homes/communities and above who do not perform as well as one would expect once financial stability and access to information are no longer in question. Although socioeconomic status cannot be totally ruled out as one of the factors influencing the academic success of these students, I do not believe it is the major or only culprit contributing to the struggles Black

males endure when attempting to navigate the educational system. In fact scholars have pointed out other issues in the educational system, which contribute to the difficulties African American males face. For instance, in McGee's (2013) study on high achieving African American males it was stated that "most Black high school graduates" (p. 449) never take AP courses due to two factors, being overlooked or the classes are not offered at their school. McGee goes on to point out that these issues create "significant barriers" academically for Black students with the "potential for even greater difficulties once they become adults" (p. 449). Other studies, such as Davis and Jordan (1994), described findings that indicated low teacher expectation levels for African American males translated to fewer homework assignments due to the "belief that the work would not be completed" (p. 585). During the focus group session, Randy's impression of these types of situations was:

They really do marginalize people to learn in a particular way that they may not understand or that can be somewhat tricky by just going off the perception of what somebody thinks is intelligent or academically achievable. I think that is very, very biased...and only puts people in certain areas ... like special education classes. I consider myself a pass through student even though I was the smartest African American male in my class. This [issue] traveled with me through high school and into college as well.

The issues Randy pointed out and their impact on his perception of how he was viewed, followed him throughout the rest of his secondary education process into college supports McGee's findings outlined above. Furthermore, Randy's impression of secondary education was summed up in his closing comment; "We are being trained to just memorize, memorize, we are just memorizing things... that's how we beat the system by

memorizing not critical thinking.” Additionally, Haycock’s (2006) study found that teacher and counselors advise Black males to take the basic academic courses as opposed to the advance placement classes that have been stated would make their matriculation into college much smoother due to their level of preparation for the academic rigor associated with higher education. Keith’s comments regarding his interaction with the high school counselor speaks directly to Haycock’s findings;

If I would have been able to sit down with my guidance counselor and identify my strengths and weaknesses, that would have helped me....it seemed at times the goal was to graduate from college was more so seen as a privilege, so just the guidance as far as figuring out what school and what major would have been better for me instead of having to go two and a half years in college before realizing hey this is not for me.

Grit - If that were the case one of the student participants, Joshua, would be considered an anomaly. Joshua grew up in a single parent home with two other siblings and his mother; discussed how difficult it was financially for the family to survive. Despite the financial and educational difficulties experienced growing up, Joshua was a stellar student throughout elementary and high school and his performance continued as a college student with a perfect 4.0 grade point average (GPA) majoring in finance. Duckworth, Petersen, Matthews & Kelly (2007) (as cited in Furlong, You, Renshaw, O'Malley, & Rebelez, 2013) discussed the importance of “grit” and defined it as “perserverance in and passion for accomplishing one’s long term goals” (p.756). Listening to Joshua talk about the difficulties experienced as a child growing up in a single parent home “grit” describes the drive and singleness of purpose this young man

has exhibited to reach this point in his life. According to Strayhorn's (2014) study measuring the role that grit plays in Black males' grades and academic success, there was "compelling evidence that grit positively influenced the grades of black males at Predominantly White Institutions" (p. 7). This grit or perseverance was a constant theme present in each of the interview sessions conducted with the African American males participating in this study. During the focus group discussions related to persistence and classroom experience, Terry stated "you just have to motivate yourself... I have to go above and beyond and take the initiative just to show I can actually do more than they expect." It is this drive and determination that assist Black males with overcoming many of the pitfalls they experience in both secondary and post-secondary educational processes and systems.

The urban or rural environment they experienced early in life served as a source of empowerment to strive for a college education. In many instances, they refused to be caught up with the negative information circulating about African American males' shortcomings related to academic achievement. Even though Joshua was a good student, he made two important statements about secondary schooling in the focus group and individual interviews that I feel are important to mention. Joshua stated:

At one point in my life I was taking Title 1 courses, I think my third grade year and because I didn't do good on the standardized test, it wasn't because all of my grades weren't that good; it was because of that one test. They placed you in this side room where you basically it's you and six or seven other students the majority of you are black and there is not a black teacher and you are right next door to the regular classroom... this is what the other class is doing, but we're going to be three steps behind them until you get back in your right place.

Joshua's second statement came from his individual interview session in which he made the following comments about his educational experience in high school:

I don't think my high school experience prepared me well for the college experience until my 12th grade year and the only reason I think they [teacher and counselor] pursued it was because of my high GPA. I feel as if the students who didn't have a substantial GPA kinda got left out of the movement therefore, saying people that didn't have a substantial GPA because they may not be able to do well in college. I don't think that their high school GPA defined how smart or how educable they were.

Joshua's remarks align with critical race theory's interest convergence tenet. As noted by his comments the dominant group did not show an interest in his success until realizing Joshua had the grades to be successful in college a fact they could use to their advantage related to how well they prepared their African American students for college. The value of a college education for Joshua appears to be secondary as evidenced by their (high school teachers and guidance counselors) disinterest in the students who were not high academic performers.

During the course of their conversations, study participants stated instances when their experiences could have been better or were enhanced because of the efforts of one teacher who made a difference in their lives. Terry stated,

I didn't feel as if the (high) school itself prepared me for college. I had one teacher there his name was AT, one of three African American teachers there and he taught a marketing class. He wanted to reach out and try to you know help African American males to further them to higher education and you know do something to get them through high school. But I feel like if it wasn't for him, if I never would have met him, then I wouldn't have been prepared for college at all.

Based on their comments, the study participants who attended urban schools appear to be better prepared for college because they offered more opportunities and options to participate in early college programs, AP courses, attended magnet schools and participate in a special program designed to prepare students for matriculation to college. There were some participants like Keith, whose secondary education experiences were not as positive. Keith, one of the two fifth year seniors stated:

I kinda went into the whole college thing kinda blind. It seemed at that time when I was in high school, the goal was just to graduate and that was a big thing from high school you know um college was more so seen as a privilege so just the guidance as far as figuring out what school and what major would have been better for me instead of having to go two and a half years in college and you know realizing hey this is not for me (referring to his major).

He relied more on his peers to help him prepare for college than he did the school guidance counselor. Others indicated they had similar experiences not only in high school but also in elementary school particularly involving testing periods.

High Stakes Testing - Joshua also expressed strong concerns about the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act and its overall impact on children who are not prepared to move to the next grade. Moving students forward who are not prepared academically to do so, only makes matters worse for them. Popham (2004), Smith (2005) and Causey-Bush (2005) all reported major concerns about the overall impact of the NCLB act, fearing that it would have a devastating impact of students of color. The notion of teaching to tests has always been at the forefront of the conversations because of the impact on the learning process. Students are no longer taught to be critical thinkers, they are taught to

answer specific questions on test in a specific manner. As a result of this pedagogical shift, Joshua felt that students would eventually end up not graduating and their experiences would have been so disheartening they never pursue or think of college as an option for them. Joshua closed his comments on the secondary school system by stating:

The real issues start long before students get to high school. The problem with the system is they typically have no one in the elementary school who understands the local community and what the students of color are dealing with in their homes. The students could be coming from a single parent home with low resources which means improper nourishment in the mornings and most often in the evenings also. They still have dreams of going to college and being successful in life, they just need additional assistance to make their dreams reality. The school system could do more with after school programs that would benefit the children and help provide them with additional skills needed to be successful in the classroom.

Another participant, Randy commented that “the secondary school system marginalizes students to learn in a particular way that they may not understand or be familiar with due to their home/community experience.” His remarks were also directed at standardized testing and how biased it was depending upon where you grew up as a child. He stated, “Every child is not exposed to some of the items covered in an SAT/ACT test especially if they are coming from a rural community”. It appears this group of African American males viewed the NCLB act and high stakes testing as another way to marginalize them due to differences in the experiences and information they were exposed to during their formative years opposed to the knowledge questions and examples used on most standardized test. Information contained on a public school’s website highlighted 2013 data from the US Department of Education’s (US DOE) website, which supports these

student's views and indicated of the schools in that State only 5% or 6 out of 115 school districts met the NCLB standards. Even though this is data on one state the US DOE website clearly shows that this is not a problem isolated to one state.

Terry and Mickey both grew up in an urban environment and voiced similar thoughts about the high stakes values placed on obtaining good grades and attending college. Smith (2005), was noted to criticize high stakes testing and achievement due to fears that many successful schools would fail to meet the difficult governmental standards. Mickey noted that "there were issues with how Black male students were viewed that sometimes created the wrong image related to the individual's ability to be successful based upon their grade point averages (GPAs)". Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, (2003) stated, "the ideology of Black intellectual inferiority is expressed not only in these types of interactions, but also vividly and constantly and with considerable force in the media, which inserts itself into all aspects of our lives" (p. 96). According to Mickey, "schools should consider the total person instead of just a GPA". He listed instances where he had witnessed students cheating to obtain better grades, "while the students with the 2.5-2.8 GPA may have worked hard to get his grades to only be told this is not good enough to get into college". He became very animated (actually hitting the table) as he attempted to remain in control of his emotions while discussing his experiences with the secondary education system. Terry followed up Mickey's points in the focus group discussion by stating that "there were very few if any African American male teachers that Black males can model themselves after successfully". The lack of having or building relationships with role models was critically important to Terry because he

experienced what a difference it made in his life in high school to have that type of experience. He further noted that he would not have attended college or applied himself in high school had he not developed a relationship with one teacher who happened to be an African American male.

Academic Preparedness - Jonathan called the teaching methods in high school “boxy”. The students are not being taught how to learn, critically question or engage information once it is found. Teachers need to help students understand how to learn because until this happens the system will continue to fail to produce students who can engage the world. The views above were also reported in Harper’s (2008) study which emphasized the lack of realistic and meaningful academic programs, as well as training to successfully navigate educational systems and academic shortcomings (e.g., advising, tutoring and mentoring) of the school systems to educate African American males.

Johnathan’s frustrations with the school system led to the following statement:

I hate the school system because we’re taught too much you know when you are taught too much there is not depth of learning uh I have referred to it as the paint. It’s like when a teacher has to teach 180 different things 180 different days in the high school it’s like putting on one thin layer of paint and by the time that layer is put on we have to put on another layer and so it’s like we will never have the same layer in-depth or clean coat of paint because it’s always a bunch of different paint being painted on and by the time we remember what we learned Monday we got to learn something new on Tuesday.

Jonathan would prefer being taught a limited number of things over a longer period of time to fully grasp the fundamental concepts and learning outcomes for the course. He stated,

I feel like there were no layers of learning because there are no layers of teaching, only standardized testing methods which means we had to spend our time looking for one correct answer to a problem instead of developing a deeper understanding of the subject being taught.

Randy's closing comments seemed to sum up the points each of these young men were attempting to make,

They put me in classes so I could spend more time with the subject and even being in those classes I was still taught the same way as before, no one took the time to understand what my real problem was.

He felt that from a young age the students (African American males) who made it had to force themselves to understand this system and remain committed to their education.

As students you just have to sit there and struggle your way through the educational system forcing yourself to learn. People are not being trained to take over jobs, we are trained to just memorize, memorize, we are just memorizing things that's how we beat the system by memorizing not critical thinking.

Based upon how African American males have been labeled as an "endangered species" in the classroom (Noguera 2003; and Jackson & Moore 2006) and reviewing the study participants discussion related to their classroom experiences it becomes clear why they are labeled in such a manner. The standardized manner in which students are taught today in this time of high stakes testing, African American males appear to struggle with this method of teaching and learning. They talk about not being taught to be critical thinkers and of everyone being taught in the same manner. With a one size fits all mentality instead of understanding where they are intellectually and tailoring the

educational process to take them from that location, advance their learning skills and preparing them for success at the next level. As Jonathan stated, there are no layer to learning only one right answer which was also echoed by Randy's comment about "education just being memorizing information to beat the system not critically think and engage the material in different ways." Their intellectual growth is negated due to an inability to allow their minds the freedom to imagine a world beyond current ideological parameters. Fordham (1998); Leondari, Syngollitou, and Kiosseoglou (1998); Markus and Nurius (1986); and Ogbu (1991) discuss in their studies the deficiencies faced by African American males regarding their ability to engage the university and navigate the academic rigors they are confronted with upon matriculation. Upon transitioning to the rigors of higher education African American males quickly realize there is a sizable gap between where they should be at this point in their lives and where they actually are academically. Now they have to spend extra time studying in an attempt to close this gap and meet the requirements of their chosen degree track.

Disengaged Educationally - Numerous scholars have studied the issues that have been linked to African American males academic performance and ability to navigate the system from K-12 through college (Kobrak 1992, Rowser 1997, Ladson-Billings 1998, hooks 2004, Carey 2005 & Caperton 2010) just to name a few. Based upon these scholars statements it would appear an oxymoron exists between African American males attempting to navigate this system and those who are disengaged from the system. Due to how information is generalized regarding how African American males are impacted by these phenomenon, it would appear that the literature is referring to the same group

not two separate groups. Therefore, it should raise questions related to the validity of one or both positions. If African American males are struggling to navigate the educational system, the mere notion of struggling being an attempt to accomplish, overcome or master something, how can they also be disengaged from the education system? The difficulties many are encountering may lead some students to eventually disengaging from the system; however as long as attempts are being made to advance these students should not be considered disengaged. When discussing the notion of disengagement from the educational system the study participants discussed having their passion and thirst for attaining a quality education misunderstood. Joshua framed his definition of African American males' passion and disengagement by stating:

Black males have to be more passionate to a different caliber than typical White or Hispanic students are used to witnessing. It's our passion for a driven cause due to life circumstances or the strong desire to attain something in life that is misunderstood for disengagement.

The participants also discussed cultural shock upon entering the school system due to having to learn things a different way in this new environment. Joshua felt that the term disengaged was being used in the wrong manner. He defined disengagement as "a choice and believed that what people were witnessing with African American males in the educational system was them being lost due to struggling to find themselves" and assistance with navigating their educational experiences. Mickey stated,

Because African American males are passionate and so driven to succeed they get lost in the environment and appear distant and not engaged due to trying to figure out how to be successful in the academic system.

Randy agreed with Joshua on some points related to passion and being misunderstood but he also added:

If you strip away from somebody their choices or if you limit their choices, they are going to do things that's going to make them seem angry or disengaged. I feel like it's just limiting the African American males which makes them angry and disengaged...

Harper (2008) discussed his interest in investigating and understanding how high achieving African American males successfully navigated the difficult waters of higher education. Based upon the responses above it would appear that the study participants felt the term disengaged was not being defined in the correct manner. Their disengagement was not self-selecting to give up on their educational dream. Instead disengagement for many of the study participants involved their appearing to be aloof and indifferent to what was happen around them both inside and outside of the classroom setting. Contrary to some of the scholarly findings, they are so deeply engaged and committed to their academic success that it consumes the majority of their time and mental energy. They clearly voiced that the look of anger many see on their faces is actually extreme focus on course work that must be completed. What is not mentioned in the quotes above is that many of the study participants also work one or two jobs to help pay for their college education therefore, in addition to being mentally consumed with their education they are also physically tired from working jobs to pay for their education. These factors when coupled with the understanding that many of these

students also mentioned providing some level of support to their families back home and it becomes easier to understand why they appear to be disengaged academically.

African American Male College Experience

According to DuBois' 1903 notion of "double consciousness" cited by Rucker and Grendin, (2003) in Rodgers & Summers, (2008), "African American students experience twoness, an American, and a Negro, two souls, two thoughts...two warring ideals that are more salient for Black students attending a PWI" (pp. 182-183). Listening to this group of African American male students discuss their experiences, the only mention of a double jeopardy type of situation involved one student dealing with colorism within his race. Hill (2002) stated "studies have shown lighter skinned African Americans receive higher paying salaries, attain higher employment level and spend more years in school than their darker counterparts" (p. 77). Randy discussed the difficulties he experienced due to being lightskinned and African American on a White campus. Randy stated,

I feel like I am misunderstood because I am living in what I call a double stereotype of not just being an African American male, but also a light-skinned African American male and being misunderstood for my education [aspirations]. I'm also mis-educated and led again to the stereotypes (not getting into colorism) but not only being a black male but the lightskin stereotype also falls through as well, so I am already prejudged and placed into a particular stigma or mindset.

According to James Baldwin (as cited in Hall, 1992), the root of African American difficulty is directly related to skin color. "Skin color may have an effect on every phase of an African American's life...as a well known phenomenon among

members of a minority group is a rejection of their group membership” (p. 479). For Randy this issues has caused him to be viewed differently by his racial peers because he is committed to his educational success as well as that of his fellow African American males. There are a number of different skin tones for African Americans (e.g., high-yellow, ginger, paper bag brown to blue-black) many of which are still used today to classify and marginalize people within the race. The double jeopardy is these students are isolated because they are often excommunicated by their own racial group and are not accepted by other racial groups as a member of their race. Randy was the only lightskinned African American male study participant. However his points related to skin color should be investigated and were worth mentioning for future consideration.

Defining Success/Mentoring - When the discussions turned to defining African American males success, a number of the study participants begin to use words like, passion, attending class, focus, and driven to achieve something better in life. They also talked about how easy it is to become distracted by all of the things that college life has to offer and the importance of selecting organizations and events to attend which do not negatively impact the main purpose for being in school...to get a degree. Martin described his ability to succeed in terms of “getting the right teacher and lining up your class schedule to take advantage of what the university has to offer.” One of the most important factors mentioned by 9 of the 10 study participants was finding a mentor to assist them with navigating the university. The mentor/mentee relationship encompasses much more than just conversations about what classes to take, or how to take advantage of the services offered on campus. Keith mentioned using his mentor as “someone to talk

with when he had experienced a tough day and needed to be refocused on the importance of why he was in college.” The majority of the African American males interviewed stated they use their mentors (majority are peers, with a small number of faculty members and staff sprinkled in) as secondary academic advisors on campus if they feel comfortable and have established a deep level of trust with the person ultimately leading to their success as students. Harper (2008) also spoke on the issues associated with the lack of positive role models (particularly African American male faculty role models) for undergraduate African American males and the importance of making a connection with a faculty member. The most recently reported data on minority faculty at USA shows that of the 567 tenure track faculty members (assistant, associate and full professors) 12 are African American males (2 assistant, 5 associate and 5 full professors) currently employed by the university. This translates to 2.12% of the tenure track faculty at USA are African American males. If we were to add non-tenure track faculty into the mix, the total faculty number jumps to 805 and African American male faculty members would increase by 4 additional members raising the numbers to 16 African American male faculty members, however, the overall percentage drops to 1.98% of the total faculty. The undergraduate African American male student population is 1051 (2013) which makes up approximately 7.40% of the student population. If you were to equally divide the undergraduate Black male student population up and assign them to the 16 African American male faculty members, the ratio would be 65.63 students per faculty member. If you only included the 12 tenure track faculty members, the ratio would go up to 87.50 students per faculty member. It would appear the likelihood of a large number of

undergraduate African American males being mentored by Black male faculty members is extremely remote. Although I am not totally committed to the notion that mentors have to be from the same demographic group as the mentees, I understand and agree with the students and scholarly mindset of the need for a connection between the mentee and mentor who may have had similar life experiences. It is from these experiences (African American faculty mentors) that black male students can draw upon and develop a better understanding and trust in how to navigate their journey through the educational system. McLoughlin (2009) stated, “there is great value in drawing knowledge from the breadth and depth of lived experiences from other individuals as well as cultures different than our own” (p. 109). I believe this statement validates both the perspectives of the African American males as well as my belief that gathering as much knowledge as possible from all sources and different cultures is as equally important in their growth and maturation process as gaining insight from an African American perspective only. It would appear it is a matter of developing trust or at a minimum the assumption of trust and currently that trust resides with the African American male mentor.

Black Peer Mentors - In addition to having faculty or staff mentors, most of the participants spoke of being mentored by someone within their own age group. The peer mentor may be an individual that is one or two years ahead of the mentee and is working to obtain their degree in either the same major or school. The overarching connections were most often academically related i.e., study partner, another person to bounce potential class registration ideas off of, or someone who had experiences navigating similar academic situations on campus. Mickey stated that “my peer mentors actually

have no idea they were mentors to me.” They led by example, conducted themselves and managed their business on campus. For Mickey having a peer mentor who was there when needed was “uplifting.” Terry’s feelings about peer mentors were similar to Mickey’s with the added “lifelong bond established with another African American male who remained in touch with you after graduation.” These relationships provided a level of comfort and reassurance in their ability to successfully complete their degrees. They relied on each other for support and reality checks when straying too far from their common goal of persisting and graduating from college. Randy commented on what it was like to grow up without a mentor and how difficult it was doing things on his own. “It is like having someone who can show you different avenues, talking with you about their experiences and helps you narrow your focus down when your perspectives become too broad.” Joshua’s relationship with his mentor helped him remain grounded and focused on his education. He highlighted the importance of this relationship when defining the role of the mentor as someone who made sure he stayed on track to graduate by monitoring his academic progress through the university system.

Bill discussed the importance of developing a mentor/mentee relationship with a faculty member in your discipline to assist with academic success. His faculty mentor has taken a vested interest in his life not only as a student but also as a person. His faculty mentor also serves as his academic advisor and is a White male faculty member. According to Bill,

My mentor talks with me about my other classes, builds rapport around my family’s wellbeing and provides me with time off from my music class to study

for major exams in other classes; my mentor is someone who cared about me outside of just being a student.

Bill and Randy were the only participants that had developed positive mentor/mentee relationships with faculty members. In Randy's case he did not establish his connection with a faculty member until the beginning of his junior year. He changed majors picking up Sociology as a major and African American Studies as his minor. Randy said "I have developed good relationships with faculty in both departments who mentors me on how to achieve academic success and be more engaged with the community." Based upon their conversations, African American males in this study viewed mentoring and engagement with faculty members as very important in their overall academic success in college. According to the research of Zirkel, (2002); and Caperton, (2010), social scientists have discussed the importance that role models/mentors play in the development of goals, perceptions and aspirations for young people. Just having someone to bounce ideas off, discuss course options with or how to be successful in the classroom and engaged with the campus and surrounding community added to their sense of worth and belonging at the university.

Peer Student Connections - When assigned group projects, African American males indicated they were given the least amount of work and the easiest responsibilities to complete. Their perceptions of these assignments and responsibilities indicated they were not trusted or valued as intellectually equal by the White students in the classroom space. The perceived attitudes of the White students in class by Black males related to their academic ability and intellectual acumen matches Noguera's (2003) opinion that

schools are sites where African American males are marginalized and stigmatized. This is not alluding to or stating these attitudes are prevalent in every class as there were study participants who spoke highly of their classroom experiences. The vast majority of their positive interactions took place in smaller classroom settings and enabled African American male voices to be established and engaged in the educational process. In these settings black males perceived they were engaged and contributing to the classroom experience. Conversely, in the large lecture classes, Black males indicated they did not feel comfortable (were intimidated) in those classes and most often were not at ease to engage in the classroom discussions. Engaging with the professor in large lecture classes was more difficult to manage due to the class size. According to the research, African American males are met with suspicion from professors and White peers who doubt their intellectual competence; therefore, they ignore their contributions in class or fail to select them as members in group projects or collaborative works (Charles, Fischer, Mooney, & Massey, 2009, Cokley 2003, Fries-Britt, 1997; & Harper, 2009a; as cited in Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram & Platt, 2011). Master narratives continue to be used to marginalize black males in the classroom due to how they have influenced the perceptions and feelings of the dominant culture towards African Americans but black males in particular. According to Stanley, (2007), master narratives have been used to establish and govern how social structures and processes are managed in society. Based upon this view due to the social construct of race the dominant group controlled and wrote the majority of the research related to marginalized groups. This race consciousness/bias is highlighted in Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the beginning point

for the notion that racism is “normal” in American society which is deeply interwoven into the social culture and appears normal and naturally situated to people in our culture (Delgado, 1995 as cited in Ladson Billings, 1998). I believe there are actually two factors at work here, perhaps three; CRT’s racism, stereotype threat and White racial framing. In this study most of the participants had developed either a conscious or unconscious approach to evaluating their classrooms on the first day of classes. As such, Keith stated,

The first thing I usually do when I get in my class is count how many males are usually in my class and then on top of that how many black males and usually its about one or two of us you know depending on what course it is. I know that I have to be an example as far as you know just making sure I am on top of my grades and I’m participating. I just have to realize that I am representing you know not only myself at the moment but you know almost my race at times when I’m in the classes, when I’m in these courses and I look around the room and I see nobody that looks like me.

The desire to connect with other students of color appears to be very important to black males. According to Rodgers & Summers, (2008) “support systems can be found in professors or classmates, as well as the surrounding community. There needs to be some measure of ‘fit’ between the black student and the potential support system” (p. 175).

The ability for African American males to develop peer relationships with black faculty would be very difficult given the low number of African American male faculty on campus. As evidenced by their conversations, I believe they mitigate the effects of being on a campus with a low number of Black faculty members. They place a high value on their peer relationships especially with upperclassmen who have the most knowledge

about how to successfully navigate the academic requirements of the university in order to graduate or take the best professors in a given area of study.

College Classroom Experiences

In the focus groups interviews issues associated with the classroom experience were discussed related to the perceptions of African American males related to the expectations of their professors and peers. The general consensus of the group was there was a lowered expectation of them than other students in the classroom. The study participants based their responses on expressions of surprise or excitement when they spoke up providing not only the correct answer but also showing critical thinking/analysis skills in their response. Johnathan voiced similar experiences when participating in group project “he allowed them to give him the lightest load” and Randy indicated that “I have to push myself to make sure the professor realized my dedication to performing well in the class.”

In the individual interview sessions there was a wide range of responses presented on their classroom experiences. Their observations of classmates and professors included how well they engaged with them, if they were the last person selected to participate in study groups and/or group work assignments. The study participants also noted that most of the time they are typically the only African American males in the class or one of two or three males. The majority stated that unless they were taking an African American studies course, they seldom had classes with more than two or three African American males or females. Joshua who is majoring in finance stated, “my classes consist of adult students with whom I have no real connection”. Being one of the youngest students in

the room, he thought his opinions were “less valued by the older students and professor because the adult students were already working in the field”. Flowers & Jones, (2003); Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, (1998); Jackson F., (2003); Jackson & Crawley, (2003); & Steele C. M., (1999) indicated that students and professionals who are African American face the most difficult challenges in higher education. Faced with numerous obstacles both within and outside of the classroom perhaps due in part to the color of their skin. We can note once more that colorism or racism still plays a role in how African American students are perceived and subsequently positioned inside the classroom setting. The university expects and places higher demands upon these students to not only succeed but to flourish by conformity to the educational standards in place without questioning to deeply their purpose and value in the standard.

Joshua also noted that “one of the most positive things about his classes was their diversity, having students from Europe and other foreign students as well as White students from across the U. S.” This racial/ethnic mix provided the space for a deeper level of discussion to occur inside the classroom and students were able to dialogue across many of the barriers. According to Giroux, (2000) (as cited in McLoughlin, 2009) in order to move the educational process forward, it should incorporate teaching students to cross borders. We need to learn how to hear and understand what the voices of marginalized cultures are stating about their lives on campus. In listening to the voices of the marginalized, it should be understood requesting a person to speak on behalf of their race is most inappropriate and impossible for the student to do. As Randy stated, “we do not know every African American on the face of the earth, therefore to request our

opinion on how the majority of African Americans think or reason is illogical.” He also indicated being one of only a few students of color in the classes, he was called on to represent the Black cultural view on topics being discussed in the class. Randy stated “I don’t know everything about Black culture it should be obvious I am enrolled and minoring in African American studies which should be a clear indication that I don’t know everything about Black people.”

When required to work in groups for class projects, Johnathan and Mickey discussed being expected to do less or given less to do than other group members. Johnathan admitted to allowing his classmates to stereotype him in this manner (lazy, disengaged and lacking knowledge on the topic being researched) stating that they most likely didn’t trust him with a heavier workload. Mickey also expressed instances of being assigned less responsibilities doing little or simple tasks because group members appear to think it’s not “your cup of tea or you do not know a lot about the topic so they give you the easier responsibilities.” For the majority of the African American males participating in this study, they were accustomed to being the only Black male in their classes and having to navigate the space alone. They did not feel as connected to the professor or their peers in the larger classrooms and indicated they often sat in either the front of the classroom or the back of the classroom. Mickey stated, “it is hard to relate to the other students and professors when there are not that many Black students in the class.” Carey (2005) and Laff, (2006) stated, students who engaged with the institution during their freshman year and remained attached, graduated at a higher rate than students who are not actively engaged with the university.

In the next section on academic advising, I will discuss how critically important this process is to the academic wellbeing of African American males. It is through the advising process that these student's levels of success are determined or set. According to Laff, (2006), "one of the best places for universities to begin engaging students is in the advising services process. Historically advising services tend to take the path of least resistance; advisers are more likely to recommend the student major in an area and then simply pull out the corresponding requirements sheet" (p. 38).

Academic Advising

Academic advising is one of the most important roles faculty and staff could hold related to the academic success of students. Academic advising is central to developing an academic schedule and four year plan of study for students to follow in a specific degree program. This is supported by Carey's (2005) research indicating "institutions that maintain high success rates for retaining and graduating their students have developed strong relational ties with their students by keeping them engaged with the institution thereby the end result is improved graduation rates" (p. 3). Advising is more complex and difficult to achieve as it is dependent upon developing an understanding of the student's academic capabilities and professional aspirations, selecting the appropriate potential degree tracks and ensuring the selected degree curriculum requirements are satisfied in a timely manner. The expertise of the advisor to guide students through this process is essential to their academic success. In many instances advising assignments within the faculty ranks go to junior and new faculty members who may not be well versed in the complexities of USA's degree attainment system. Understanding how to

use double dipping to meet requirement markers is one important skill needed when working to meet degree requirement without taking unnecessary courses to make progress towards graduation. Essentially double dipping is using one course to satisfy a requirement across several cognate areas within a degree track.

In an ideal world advising would be viewed as one of the critical corner stones to success on a campus of this size. However, Mickey indicated “that academic advising created the greatest barrier to his academic success.” Coming into college he had no concept of how general education courses, major courses, minor courses and free electives were used to meet the requirements of his degree to graduate. He was relying on the expertise and wisdom of his academic advisor to guide him through this process. Unfortunately his experience with the academic advisor was less than productive and left him without a clear understanding of how the advising process worked or his responsibility for his progress towards graduation. Another area of concern deals with advising codes; once students are provided their advising access code, students have the ability to alter their class schedule and select classes that were not discussed during the advising session. This process leads students to sign up for classes out of sequence without successfully completing prerequisite courses first, and can prolong their graduation from college by up to two years. Keith provided valuable insight into how difficult the advising situation can be for African American males attempting to succeed academically.

I’ve had a difficult journey as far as advising in particular. I want to say in my five years here I have had maybe 6 or 7 different advisors. Some of that changed

semester to semester, or year to year. I've changed schools as well so that also changed my advisor. After a while I just received my advising codes via email and would figure out what classes to take myself. Initially when I did have an advisor my first advisor, you know my freshman year I took some extremely challenging classes. I have taken unnecessary classes, and I've taken classes at the wrong time which ultimately pushed back my graduation day. I would much rather have one advisor to grow with that knew what my goals were and where my strengths lay.

This example clearly indicates perhaps an isolated instance of the issues associated with the advising structure, however, that would not appear to be the case. It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that a number of the study participants who had mentors, used them as secondary advisor if they had knowledge and expertise in navigating the academic requirements of the university. Joshua also stated "his academic advisor seemed to have low expectations for his success in the classroom." This led him to seek out a mentor who had knowledge about the advising process and how best to select and manage his degree path incorporating a checks and balance approach using his academic advisor and mentor to stay on track academically. Randy's concern with the advising process was "the amount of time allotted to meet with your advisor." He mentioned a "one hour session did not provide adequate time to create a class schedule or for the advisor to learn about the passions of his or her students beyond their degree or upon graduating." If the advising process is to work, professors/advisors need to provide more time to talk about the student's passions and develop the right course of action for registering for classes that meet these requirements. According to Rouse (2011) there needs to be a

...commitment to transform the habits of mind of many higher education professionals/practitioners who enter the academic advising profession without

the proper sociocultural and socio-political tools of understanding and knowledge to assist them in meeting the diverse needs of today's diverse college students (p. 1).

Martin is another student who has taken on developing his class schedule because of poor advising. He recommended:

Developing a system that prior to engaging in the first SOAR session students are provided the ability to meet with an advisor/mentor to provide the students the ability to fully discuss their ambitions and for the advisor/mentor to exchange information about what advising entails, how to read and understand the degree tracking sheets available on the university's website and to establish a rapport that enables the advisor to get to know the students and develop a better sense of what they want to accomplish in life.

Terry also voiced his dislike for the advising process by stating, "I have only been to like one or two academic advising sessions. I don't really like the academic sessions ...academic advising doesn't help you."

As evidenced by the study participant's responses above, 6 out of 10 experienced some type of negative outcomes from the advising process on campus. Three of the participants stopped using their department's advisors and develop their own class schedules. Sixty percent of the study participants were experiencing difficulties with the current advising structure of the university. These students are also seeking other means of navigating the academic system of the university to meet their degree requirement. In Carey's (2005) research, four factors were outlined as playing a significant role in how successful institutions engage and graduate their students:

- It matters whether institutions focus on getting their students engaged and connected to the campus, particularly in the critical freshman year;
- It matters whether there is a genuine emphasis on the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning, because academic success and degree completion go hand in hand;
- It matters whether administrators and faculty monitor student progress, taking advantage of new data systems to tease out patterns of student success. Successful school use that information not only to help individual students but also to make needed changes in policies and practice; and,
- It matters a lot whether campus leaders make student success a top institution-wide priority – and when they stick with that priority over multiple years (p. 22).

The students who have developed workarounds to the system have encountered difficulties when attempting to navigate the advising system without assistance from someone (mentors) in the university who understands the degree attainment process and helping the students meet their requirement. Carey's statement above speaks to this point and offers suggestions regarding how institutions are best served to engage with their student population from the beginning of their freshman year through graduation. By having faculty and staff take a vested interest in the lives and health of the institution and the students it serves, I feel many of the issues associated with advising and navigating the institution can be overcome and corrected. Even the students offered suggestions for making simple modifications to the advising system. These changes in their opinions might help the university retain and graduate African American males at a higher rate and in many ways mirrors Carey's (2005) four factors. Gergen and Stevens' (as cited in Rouse, 2011) study uses a social justice developmental model (see Figure 1) to assist advisors "through three developmental phases which encourage advisors to examine the fundamental connections and conflicts between *self and* society that influence our personal lives/relationships and our interactions within our social world" (p. 103).

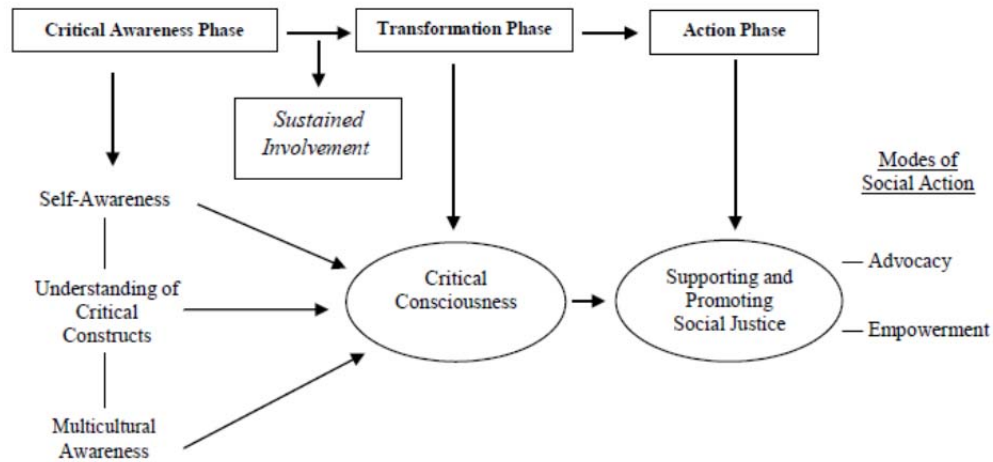


Figure 1. Social Justice Development Model

The academic advising structure philosophy that the student alone is responsible for monitoring and making sure classes in which s/he are enrolled meets all degree requirements appears to be flawed. The study participants indicated the difficulties experienced with the academic advising system related to “being misadvised, taking unnecessary courses, enrolling in courses out of sequence, and receiving registration codes without meeting and being advised by their advisors.” They also voiced concerns with being expected to understand and manage their academic degree progress without proper training and guidance on how to successfully achieve this requirement without prior knowledge of the system and how it operates. Based upon these expectations, African American males in this study seemed to favor an academic advising model based on training, mentoring, and advising to make the most of their college experience. They were concerned about the university continuing to holding students responsible for completing their degree requirements without some level of training on how to use and

navigate the degree audit system. Included in this training module would be hands on experience with developing a class schedule, providing their academic advisor with up-to-date information on their progress towards degree, and learning how to access and read the degree audits to track their progress towards graduation.

The African American males participating in this study were very concerned with the overall impressions and impact they had in their classes and on the campus as a whole. Their commitment to changing what they perceived as the mindset of others came across very strong in both the group and individual interview sessions. They wished their professors and other students realized just how hard they have to work academically, with student organizations and working either a full or part-time job to help pay for their college education. The African American males interviewed were successful because of their commitment to themselves and the understanding of the value of their college education regarding their ability to support a family later in life. These students also appear to understand the importance of giving back to the community based upon their engagement with various community service activities, mentoring in both the local elementary and high schools, and being actively engaged on campus. They view their commitment to their education as short term pain, to achieve a long term goal. This is clearly evident based upon how active they were on campus and in the local community. Although, the focus of this study was not to generalize the findings and results and attempt to apply them broadly to all African American males, I believe there was reasonable evidence that these students are not disengaged but rather attempting to understand and develop viable ways to successfully navigate the educational system.

Academic Support Services - African American males were all aware that academic support was available to students on campus. The manner in which they were made aware varied depending upon how they attempted to engage the service. One student walked around campus questioning peers, institutional staff and faculty about the types of support services that were available and where they were located. Other students were enrolled in the university freshmen seminar class designed to provide them with firsthand knowledge about the academic support services available to students, where these services are located and how to sign up for assistance. The students were also taught about institutional policies and procedures associated with student conduct and the academic honor code. The final learning outcome of this seminar course was to physically show students the location of support services on campus, as well as, a session with library staff to familiarize students with the layout of the library and how to locate resources and services offered by the university. The university also supports learning communities which are designed for specific groups (i.e., science, athletics, freshmen experience, honors students, etc.) and incorporates learning objectives similar to the freshmen seminar class to help students access academic support services on campus. It should be noted that although most of the African American males interviewed were aware that some types of services were available, some were not aware of the wide variety of support offerings. For example, Jarrell could only name two academic support services offered, “tutoring and supplemental instruction,” both of which are managed out of the same office. The final two resources of information for some students was their faculty teaching a class in which they were enrolled and searching the university website

for information about academic support for one of their classes. The faculty recommended students go to specific support labs based upon their needs in the professor's course, while the university website served as a tool for finding information about the support services offered by the university and how to access those services either face-to-face or online.

The office of multicultural affairs designed nontraditional academic support programs aiding African American males with their success, particularly those who were classified as first generation or economically depressed areas. These programs were constructed to also assist this populations of students successfully navigate the university's academic and social structures. Terry indicated:

I participated in programs my freshmen year to take advantage of everything the university offered to assist me with being successful academically at the university. The only negative comments about academic support services were the lack of and low numbers of African American males employed in addition to times in certain areas when it appeared they were too busy to work with you on your academic success. Initially they only had a few minutes to work with you before they moved on to someone else, giving you minimal tips or suggestion because they never fully understood what you were struggling with in your class.

Academic success for African American males in this study hinged on having mentors and faculty members who dedicated their time, talents and knowledge of the university resources to help them achieve success in the classroom that led to graduating from the university.

There was a non-academic component constantly present in a majority of the interviews conducted both in the individual and focus group sessions. Approximately

60% of the African American males were committed to being engaged by joining organizations with a focus on serving others both on campus and in the local community. More than half of the African American males interviewed were serving as mentors for elementary or high school students. They were also involved with student organizations on campus that provided programming across a wide range of topics. These topics include pageants, inviting speakers to discuss how to be successful academically, and provide other students with a space to voice their concerns and talk out their frustration with peers who faced similar situations to achieve a positive outcome. Although being involved with organizations may not have a direct link to their academic success in the classroom, indirectly being engaged with these activities provided these students with not only a sense of worth and belonging on campus; it also provided them with outlets to discuss common issues with their peers and develop positive solutions to their concerns associated with being successful academically. The combination of mentoring/faculty connections with being involved with campus organizations appeared to be very important links to the academic success of the African Americans males who participated in this study. Each individual viewed success based upon their lived experiences dealing with the educational system, however, all were clear that academic success was completing their pursuit of a degree in their major and graduating from college.

Conclusion

Phenomenology seeks to interrogate and critically analyze situations in an attempt to make sense of what can be found. The interview sessions with African American males provided a unique opportunity to listen to their perspectives and lived experiences

throughout their journey in the educational system. Their responses, passion and determination about securing a quality education was always present in their responses to questions and couched within the focus group dialogue. I believe the prospect of having their voices heard and positively situated into the scholarly knowledge base was of utmost importance to these young men. Harper (2006, 2008, 2011) speaks to the importance of placing the voices of African American males into the mainstream knowledge base using the framework of critical race theory. Harper believed in using counter-narratives to debunk some of the information contained in the master narratives that have informed other scholars, the media, and research detailing the struggles of African American males to engage the educational system. Ladson-Billings, (1998) also reported on the value of getting the lived experiences and voices of African Americans into the mainstream of knowledge. Without including the voices and perspectives of African American males and other marginalized groups into the knowledge stream and developing a different perspective of African American males, I fear the system will continue to reproduce itself and replicate the same information while failing to achieve the social change needed for the success of these students.

These students believed in their ability to make a difference, their dedication to the betterment of as many African Americans as possible was clearly evident based upon the number of community based hours volunteered working with younger Black males. These efforts engage underrepresented males in elementary and high school seeking to provide a different view of their ability to succeed and attend college. Their very presence also satisfies another valuable purpose, serving as peer mentors/role models to

younger African American males who get the opportunity to see Black males in a positive light. I feel strongly about the value of getting the positive stories of African American males and other marginalized group's academic and community service successes inserted into the knowledge base. The vast majority of the research reported on African American males is cast in a negative light. As I worked with the data collected during the interviews and previous literature from other scholarly studies, it was apparent that through the use of scholarly data; African American males have been positioned and generalization based upon these finding. However, this generalization across the entire black male demographic is flawed and should be reinvestigated. Noguera, (2003, & 2008) reported on the various terms most often used to describe African American males. The majority of which creates a negative persona with the public and continues to support the Willie Lynch legacy of control woven deeply into American Society better than 300 years ago. This framework (White Racial Framing) has dominated American society and continues to be used to control the lives and mobility of African Americans from slavery to the current day.

Despite the challenges detailed throughout the documentation and discussed above, in 2012-13 and 2013-14, African American males persisted at a rate that was higher (77.6% and 83.3% respectfully) than other traditional (male) racial categories (compared to White males 67.8% and 70.3%; Asian males 69.2% and 80.0%; and Hispanic males 60.7% and 80.9% respectively; due to the low number of American Indians, their data was not reported to protect the students' identities) at the university. The four year graduation rate percentages for African American males were 18.5% in

2009 and 20.9% in 2010 (compared to White males 25.7% and 22.2%; Asian males 23.5% and 29.3%; and Hispanic 26.8% and 16.9% respectively; due to the low number of American Indians, their data was not reported to protect the students' identities).

Additionally, the five year graduation rate for the group in 2009 (which is the most recent data available) was 52.3% compared to Whites 44.6%; Asians 52.9%; and Hispanics 43.9% respectively. The significant difference between the persistence and graduation rate raises questions and seems to support study participant's remarks about the need to revise the university's academic advising process. Additionally as Carey (2005) pointed out, we must engage these students prior to their arrival on campus for fall semester classes. Early intervention appears to keep these students engaged with the institution as they progress through the academic arena. It also brings into play their comments about developing and creating a sustainable mentorship program to work with this population of students as they attempt to successfully navigate university systems. The issue for Black males does not appear to be their ability to meet the academic rigor of the university; instead they are advocating for guidance and mentoring from different sectors of the university. First and foremost the findings seem to indicate there is a strong desire and need for mentoring by the African American males participating in this study.

Secondly, they were not looking for special consideration in the classrooms or by the system in place at the university. The data seems to clearly suggest the need for better guidance (a roadmap so to speak) regarding what is expected of them and how to achieve academic success in each of their degree tracks. There is a systemic disconnect for these students that existed from the moment they were accepted and matriculate to campus.

They were aware of the manner in which they are perceived and were hypersensitive related to how their peers and professors react to them through expressions, comments or body language when they engaged in classroom discussions. Their responses indicated they not only read the class lesson, but had also given the topic considerable thought and critical analyses. These students were seeking a level, fair and equitable playing field where they could grow, experience academic success and prepare for their professional careers.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the findings outlined throughout this chapter juxtaposed against my research questions and theoretical framework. Specifically, I use the themes pulled from my study to respond to the research questions related to African American males, how they are positioned to struggle with the educational system and any commonalities and differences exist. In this chapter, I will also discuss the limitations of this study and the implications for future research into this topic and other related areas. Recent reports and scholarly findings continue highlighting the difficulties African American males are experiencing in society and within the educational systems. I feel that one of the best methods for remedying issues within any specific demographic group is to understand firsthand how that group perceives their existence and place in America's educational system, compare those results against other similarly situated groups and begin building a data base of these results searching for commonalities and differences within and between groups. The African American males in this study clearly indicated they have not disengaged from the educational system; it is the educational system that has disengaged from them. In the final chapter, I will also

make recommendations for improving the university's advising system to train students, faculty and staff engaged in advising how to read and evaluate the degree audit forms as well as how to access and navigate through the 'what if process' for students looking to change their majors. By creating a robust training module for incoming students to include faculty and staff, I feel that the institutions retention and graduation rates for this and other underrepresented groups will increase significantly. In closing I would like to leave you with this thought:

If you give a man a fish you will feed him for a day! However,
if you teach a man to fish, you will feed him for a lifetime.

Chinese Proverb

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Race may always matter; however, race should never be the determining factor of the intellectual value of a person(s) in our society.

Rod Wyatt
February 2015

Introduction

During the individual and focus group interview sessions, most of the study's participants articulated their commitment to being successful academically and professionally. However, prior to agreeing to participate in my study, most of the participants were apprehensive about voicing their lived and educational experiences due to fears of being labeled or misunderstood. Their concerns seemed to stem from media report about the academic struggles and achievement gap between African American males and their peers. They suggested the result of those reports is all black males are lumped into the same categories as disengaged, unprepared economically, socially and emotionally to engage in a meaningful educational experience. They also discussed how previous studies have been used to generalized and portray African American males as "at risk" or "endangered" like a wild animal close to extinction. The study participants were deeply concerned their comments and thoughts would be misinterpreted, misrepresented and ultimately taken out of context once this study was submitted and

available to the public. In part this was due to the methods used by mass media outlets (print, live and electronic) to report the academic achievement gap between African American males and their peers (primarily Whites), which do nothing to enhance people's understanding of why some not all black males struggle to achieving academically or why it is so difficult for this group to engage and navigate the educational system in the United States.

Research Questions

Based upon the lived experiences and perspectives of African American males, what are the pre-college experiences reported by African American males that prohibit them from succeeding academically in college? The study participants listed several pre-college experiences that could have prohibited them from being more successful college students include: No Child Left Behind laws (NCLB); state mandated testing (high stakes); depending upon the school district a limited number of or in some cases no AP courses in the curriculum; and a lack of mentoring or guidance regarding course selection as well as career/college choices. More than 50% of the study participants stated that their high schools prepared them well for college. Yet, during the course of their conversations, the same participants also listed instances where their secondary education experiences could have been better by helping prepare them not only for the academic rigors of higher education but also educating them about the social aspects of college life.

NCLB and High Stakes Testing - Many participants felt the impact NCLB Act on African Americans (particularly males) has been devastating. In the focus group session, participants referenced witnessing students being moved through the education system.

Without receiving proper preparation for the next grade level these students subsequently ended up unable to enrollment in college or to pursue a vocation upon graduating from high school due to poor academic preparation and achievement. They attributed poor academic preparation to NCLB testing standards, which forced teachers to forgo critically engaged pedagogical practices to focus on ensuring students were prepared to pass the end of year standardized test. According to a 2014 report from *the National Center for Fair & Open Testing* authored by Neill and Guisbond, there have been “unprecedented” (p. 3) opposition nationwide to testing due to the perception of “overuse and misuse” (p. 3). Shapiro (as cited in Jones, Jones, Hardin, Chapman, & Yarborough, 1999) is noted for his argument that “standardize testing sells education short” (p. 200). He also opined that this type of testing was a “...vulgar notion that good teaching is reducible to higher scores on the test and is surely the most limited of ways to think about the nature and purpose of teaching” (pp. 200-201). Joshua expressed strong concerns about the NCLB Act and its overall impact on children who are not prepared to move to the next grade; moving students forward who are not prepared academically to do so, “only makes matters worse for them.”

One of the study participants noted that teachers were very limited in their teaching methods “only covering surface related materials ...there was no depth to the learning experience” (Jonathan, personal communication, February 2014). Essentially Jonathan was referring to being prepared to take the state mandated standardized test; teachers were pressured to assure students were prepared to pass the end of year examination to ensure the school met state and federal expectations. This student’s

observations are perhaps the result of requirements associated with high stakes testing whereby teachers are either positively or negatively (by loss of pay and teacher competency testing) incentivized financially for meeting state mandated testing objectives and not the teacher's expertise or ability to be creative and engage students in critical inquiry of the subject matter. The article by Jones et al., (1999) supported this position by stating "among the high stakes associated with this state [testing] plan were financial incentives of \$1,500 bonuses for teachers if their schools exceed their schools [test] expectations" (p. 200). It appears teachers are benefitting more for their schools meeting state and federal standardized testing expectations, than preparing students academically and socially to matriculate and successfully engage higher education or the job market. The impact of teachers only focused on their students passing state standardized tests becomes obvious once the students transition to college and are required by professors to critically engage the subject matter in their class. The study participants stated it was at this point that they realized how far behind they were academically. As a result of NCLB and high stakes testing's influence on teacher pedagogy, the participants felt that their inability to critically engage with their peers in the classroom created unnecessary stress and posed a serious threat and disadvantage to their ability to succeed in college. They had to spend extra time preparing for class and studying to get up to speed with their peers.

Advanced Placement Courses - Based upon the interview results, it appears the students who attended rural schools in this state are offered a limited range of Advanced Placement (AP) courses which resulted in classes filling up and unavailable for many

students or they are advised to enroll in high school courses that did not adequately prepare them for college. The students from rural communities also stated their educational opportunities were limited as a result of not having the option/ability to participate in early college programs, to attend magnet schools, or to attend schools with a special focus on science, technology and math which could enhance their chances of being prepared to attend college. Previous research and this study's results collaborated with earlier findings which indicated guidance counselors most often overlooked or failed to consider African American males as students needing or desiring to take AP courses (McGee, 2013). This failure to consider enrolling Black males for AP courses seems to match Feagin's (2010) findings on white racial framing based upon Black students being intellectually inferior and CRT's position related to "race", it always matters and comes into play (consciously or unconsciously) when involving African Americans (particularly males). On average these students end up completing one or two AP courses in high school only to realize upon enrolling in college they were inadequately prepared for higher education, which necessitated spending extra time at night and on weekends studying to meet the rigors of their institutions academic standards. The basic high school courses did nothing to prepare them for college and only covered basic information needed to pass state requirements. Most of the participants had friends or knew of African American males who were unable to make the transition needed to remain in college and therefore withdrew at the end of their first semester or after the first year in school.

The issues noted above for many students could have been mediated if they would have had assistance from their guidance counselor's office in high school. Guidance counselors could have served as the conduit students needed to assist them with selecting college preparatory and AP courses to help prepare them for college. Additionally, the guidance office could have assisted and advised students on potential college majors based upon their unique skill sets or at the least provided advice on the best schools to attend based on their potential college major. Instead research (Haycock, 2006) indicated that guidance counselors and teachers at the secondary education level typically assigned students of color to classes that were not as academically challenging as college preparatory and AP courses.

Mentoring - The study participants stated mentoring opportunities in high school were very limited and in most cases did not exist due to the low number (or lack) of African American male teachers in the school. The impact of not having a role model that looked like them, who they could gain valuable insight from regarding what to expect in college, and what classes they should enroll in to help prepare them for college was tremendous. Harper's (2008) work supported the study participants' acknowledgment stating that having a mentor in the faculty (someone who looked like them meaning African American male faculty members) was critical to their success as students and in life. One of the most important factors mentioned by 9 of the 10 participants was finding a mentor to assist them with navigating the university. The mentor/mentee relationship encompasses much more than just conversations about what classes to take, or how to take advantage of the services offered on campus. Keith

mentioned using his mentor as someone to talk with when he had experienced a tough day and needed to be refocused on the importance of why he was in college. The majority of the African American males interviewed used their mentors as secondary academic advisors on campus if they felt comfortable and had established a deep level of trust with the person ultimately leading to their success as students.

Peer Mentors - In addition to having faculty or staff mentors, most of the participants spoke of being mentored by someone within their own age group. The peer mentor was most often an individual that was one or two years ahead of the mentee and working to obtain their degree in either the same major or school. The overarching connections were most often academically related and in the form of study partners, another person to bounce potential class registration ideas off of, or someone who had experiences navigating similar academic situations on campus. Mickey stated that his peer mentors actually had no idea they were mentors to him. They led by example, conducted themselves professionally and managed their business on campus. For Mickey having a mentor who was there when needed was “uplifting”. Terry’s feelings about peer mentors were similar to Mickey’s with the added lifelong bond established with another African American male who remained in touch with you after graduation. These relationships provided a level of comfort and reassurance in their ability to successfully complete their degrees. They relied on each other for support and reality checks when straying too far from their common goal of persisting and graduating from college. Randy commented on what it was like to grow up without a mentor and how difficult it was doing things on his own. “It is like having someone who can show you different

avenues, and talk with you about their experiences and help you narrow your focus down when your perspectives become too broad.” Joshua’s relationship with his mentor helped him remain grounded and focused on his education. He highlighted the importance of this relationship by defining the role of the mentor as someone who made sure he stayed on track to graduate by monitoring his academic progress through the university system. Based upon their conversations, African American males in this study viewed mentoring and engagement with faculty members as very important in their overall academic success in college. In the focus group interview all of the participants agreed that just having someone to bounce ideas off, discuss course options with or how to be successful in the classroom and engaged with the campus and surrounding community added to their sense of worth and belonging at the university.

Terry developed his mentor/mentee relationship in high school with an African American male teacher and spoke of the importance their bond played during his high school years both academically and socially. Terry’s mentor challenged him to study harder to elevate his GPA in all classes, enroll in college preparatory courses which would better prepare him for college, had candid conversations about the value of getting connected and involved once on a college campus, and finally, taught him the value of giving back to the community through volunteerism. Terry noted had it not been for this relationship, he would have been like so many of his high school peers, just completing enough work to get average grades while enrolled in basic classes and would have struggled to get accepted into college. Terry was a strong advocate for establishing the mentor/mentee relation early in African American male students’ high school years. It

could prove invaluable with the right mentor and help, Black males would see that there are African American male teachers who were willing to serve as positive role models to assist them with obtaining their dreams. Otherwise, many may continue to struggle in the educational system, becoming discouraged and eventually dropping out of school or either doing mediocre work leaving them with limited options when applying for college.

College Success

Research question two examines: *How do African American male college students define success regarding their college experience?* When the discussions turned to defining their success a number of the study participants began to use words like, passion, attending class, focus, and driven to achieve something better in life. The definition most often used to describe what success looked like to the participants was simple and straightforward persisting and graduating from college. African American males discussed the need to have strong sense of conviction to survive on a Predominantly White Campus. This determination and dedication to their academic success called “grit” was defined earlier in another sections and was best illustrated by comments from Joshua about black students being deeply passionate to succeed academically in college. This passion is what fueled Black males to work harder to attain something (success, job, or acceptance as an intellectual equal) in life. One hundred percent of the participants were enrolled full-time (12-15 semester hours), worked 20-30 hours per week to defray some of their college expenses, and were actively engaged with a campus student organization.

The study participants discussed their views on why they had to be actively engaged with student organization, community service projects, and an active participant

in their classes. In “Chapter IV: Findings and Results” scholars noted that African American males being engaged by their institution appeared to create a sense of belonging which lead to higher retention and graduation rates (Carey, 2005 and Laff, 2006). Most of the study participants believed that their college and future success depended upon the level of engagement, service work and classroom rapport they could develop with the faculty. Being engaged with student organizations and community service projects were seen as résumé building activities that showed potential employers and schools their level of commitment to engage the campus community as a viable and contributing member of the institution. The students’ success from their perspectives was also determined by their ability to develop a strong relationship with several different faculty members who could serve as character references for jobs or graduate school upon graduation. For these students success was much more than going to class and getting good grades, although persisting and graduating from college were the ultimate goals and indicators used for determining their success from a societal standpoint. The study participants acknowledged that good grades, persisting and graduating from college did not automatically guarantee employment or admittance into graduate school. They needed strong relationship with faculty members in additions to the other qualities outlined above to receive an interview. The study participants realized that they had to perform at the highest standards possible across all of these areas in order to get a foot in the door.

Perceived Barriers

The final research question posed was: *What are the self-perceived barriers that exist on the university campus (both curricular and extracurricular) that hinder their ability to be successful (defined as ability to persist and graduate from college)?* Six of the ten participants stated they experienced barriers of different types that have impacted their ability to be fully successful in college. The barriers most commonly cited include academic advising (systemic issue), campus police alerts, and stereotyping. Keith talked about the invisible barriers he felt were manifested within the university's tutoring and lack of mentoring process for freshmen. Most African American males (all students) arrive on campus having never experienced being in charge of managing their academic progress. For the most part, the required courses throughout the secondary schooling process are determined by state educational requirement, with students having the ability to select their non-core and AP courses that prepared them for higher education (if the courses were offered and available at their high school). Unless they had a family member who had previously attended college to guide them and point out critical university support processes needed to be successful, these students were left to figure out how to navigate the institution alone. Most of the participants expected the support system (tutoring and mentoring) to be promoted on campus with clear directions on how to access the services or secure a mentor. This proved not to be the case and caused many students to spend extra time identifying the support services and also searching for mentors who were knowledgeable of how to navigate the university system. Keith was of the opinion that the high non-return rate of African American males between their

freshmen and sophomore years in school was due to the institution's failure to engage the students early in their freshmen year. Keith opined that the university lost between 20-30 (African American male) students due to failing to engaging them in their college experience and stated "he would not have gotten through and persisted had it not been for joining a student organization". As Carey (2005) noted student persistence and graduation rates increase significantly when they are engaged by the university early in their college careers. The barriers some participants encountered were associated with cultural, racial, and gender boundaries that separate people. Giroux (as cited in McLoughlin, 2009) spoke about the importance of crossing borders to develop greater understanding between differences and similarities between people from other cultures. Failure to communicate across borders, keep people separated and in many ways hampers and creates barriers to learning and intellectual growth due to a lack of knowledge and lived experiences being exchange between people from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

Police Alerts - During Keith, Bill, Joshua's individual interview sessions, they indicated that African American males were negatively impacted by the police alerts that are sent to students, faculty and staff. These alerts create a fear in Black males as well as other students on campus who may be studying in the library or student center when the notifications are issued. The manner in which these messages are coded it could be any one of a number of the African American male students on campus at that time. Joshua and Keith expressed similar comments regarding sheltering in one location when the notifications are issued and waiting for the text telling you to resume normal activities. It

is incidents like these that cause African American males to disconnect from the university, they feel targeted and at risk when these alerts are released. It is acts of this nature that cause them to question if they are welcomed on campus and in the surrounding community.

The study participants' discussions about barriers also included challenges within the institution that make it difficult to successfully navigate the higher education process. The major challenge that stood out above the others was academic advising including the automated degree audit system. Most of the study participants indicated that after their initial meeting, they either never met with the advisor again or received their advising codes via email, or they were assigned a different advisor the next semester. They felt like they needed individualized advising sessions as opposed to sitting down in a group advising session which limited the amount of time the advisor could spend discussing course options with them. Also, the study participants did not feel comfortable discussing their academic information in a public space where other students could listen in on their conversations with the academic advisors. Receiving poor academic advising for the majority of the study participants had the greatest impact on their ability to persist and make progress towards their degree in a timely manner. The participants stated getting off to a good start academically the first two or three semesters in college is critical. Academic advising plays one of the most important roles in this process and can make or break students in the first two semester of school.

Stereotyping - The majority of the findings covered in this section helps to enhance the study participant's feelings of being stereotyped into commonly accepted

labels. Being constantly pulled by city police on the street surround the university where fellow students could witness only enhances the feeling of distrust, fear and uncertainty peers and professional staff on campus feel around African American males. Add to these feelings the stereotypical labeling associated with the academic achievement gap of Black males compared to those of their peers and the situation only compounds itself and complicates their ability to successfully navigate and engage the campus community. The participants stated these situations never go away and may be less noticeable on some days however; the knowledge of their existence is always in the back of their mind as they work towards graduation. These students mentioned having to always be aware of how they presented themselves, how they talked and enunciated their words, the way they dress and the manner in which they approached people from different races and cultures on campus. When these students talked about USA being one of the most diverse campuses in the university system; they are also quick to point out that yes the school has a diverse population of students, and staff, however, the institution is not as embracing of difference as it professes to be when it comes to African American males.

Discussion

Mentoring for African American males has been mentioned several times throughout this study as well as in previous studies conducted on the issues this population of students has encountered in school and life. Numerous mentoring programs have been established on university campuses within secondary education and privately owned organizations all aimed at assisting African American males navigate the difficulties they face within the educational system from K-12 through higher education.

For example in Denver, Colorado a program entitled “*Black Men in Support of Education*” brings together successful Black male business and community leaders with Black male high school students to establish mentoring relationship and opportunities for the students. The importance of mentoring to African American males is not some new finding or phenomenon and has been around for quite some time. In fact in the African American community the saying “it takes a village to raise a child” was not only common place, but in fact a reality. Generations of young adults served as mentors for the smaller children keeping them engaged in different activities and out of trouble. However, in today’s society with mixed neighborhood and people constantly transitioning in and out of the community it is difficult to establish this type of community building and mentoring. We are now seeing students entering into college seeking to develop a relationship with someone on campus willing to help guide the student through the high education process. With the changing demographic of the student population entering secondary and higher education sites, these institutions must develop meaning solutions to address these student’s needs. Mentoring programs must be included as one of the many programs needed.

The type of mentoring being referred to should involve both personal and professional connections for the students and provide opportunities that engage in activities that broaden the horizons of African American males intellectually as well as other students of color. The mentoring relationships must also serve as an empowering experience for the students and professional serving as mentors. A good mentoring program brings together successful people from a wide variety of professions and

experiences. The mentoring program must be comprehensive and sustainable, not a program that is ended once the objectives have been achieved and some moderate level of success realized. It should be noted here that mentoring programs viewed as prescriptive in nature lead to false connections between mentors and mentee and face the inability to provide tangible and measurable positive results.

Based upon the findings of this study, USA is in dire need of such a mentoring program. There have been numerous attempt made to establish mentoring opportunities for African American males, however each one has in some way fallen short or been discontinued by the university due to funding issues. As the university continues to diversify, the need for a program of this nature will continue to increase. A major problem for the university currently resides in the faculty ranks. USA's African American tenure track Black male faculty members is at or near an all-time low. Although it is not mandatory for mentors of African American male students to be African American also, the research tells us that Black males relate better with individuals who are likely to have a similar background as theirs and are of the same race.

Based on the study findings, I would strongly recommend that USA evaluate the current faculty positions available or projected for vacancy within the next 12 to 18 months and develop a minority recruitment plan for faculty that when possible and feasible to do so qualified minority faculty (males and females) are hired to help meet the needs of our diverse population of students. It is also understood that USA cannot recruit enough faculty of color to keep pace or meet this growing demand. Therefore, the

institution should also seek to develop relationships with professionals within the local community who may be willing to assist with addressing the needs of the African American male students as well as the demands that will be placed on the institution upon their matriculation to campus. Currently the lack of a mentoring program is one of the major issues for African American male students on USA's campus.

Research Study Limitations

All studies whether quantitative or qualitative have limitations of some type associated with their scope, participant size, the unpredictability of the study participants, and in many cases researcher's biases, etc. I feel that the primary limitation of this study was the small sample size. I am by no means discounting the experiences or wisdom gained from the African American males' life lessons adjusting to and navigating within the educational system. However, I am advocating for a broader study involving various types of higher education institutions to determine if there are similar issues within the academy as a whole that negatively impact African American males.

Although this study involved a small sample size, there are some scholars (Boyd & Creswell, as cited in Groenewald, 2004) of phenomenological research design studies who feel that "two to 12 participants are sufficient enough to obtain saturation for the study being conducted" (p. 11). I firmly believe that studies of this nature causes people to stop and think about the impact and importance of hearing the voices and perspectives of marginalized people that have been negatively influenced by the educational system.

Future Study

While the focus of this study was on African American male college students, expanding a study of this nature to include the voices of African American female college students as well as other students of color (Latino, Asian, and Native American Indian) to understand from their voices and lived perspectives the challenges they faced while attempting to navigate the education system in the United States. A study of this nature seems to be invaluable and much needed to understand 1) if Black males experience education in a manner that is different from other underrepresented groups perspectives, 2) including the voices of the other groups should provide a different perspective on the educational process as a whole based upon the views of other populations of underrepresented students; and 3) given the shifting demographics in our population, it would also seem beneficial to include or conduct a study focused from the White students' perspectives related to the challenges they face with the educational system and the impact of they feel from this shift in focus and position in the United States if not globally. A study of this type may shed additional light from a White perspective on how they have been impacted while navigating the educational system.

Mentioned in the study limitation section was the need to conduct a more robust study of African American males attending various institutions (public, private, religious, four and two year institutions, large [15,000 and above] and small [10,000 or below]), and across different geographical region to collect data which would provide for a much better understanding of the challenges faced while attempting to navigate the educational system. It would also provide the researcher the opportunity to perform a comparative

analysis across several different types of institution. An analysis of this type could be used to determine if there are common issues across higher education institutions impacting African American males that can be corrected. Additionally, it may illuminate how deeply imbedded the issues are in higher education related to this population of students and if there advantages, disadvantages and other nuisances that might present themselves. It would also be important to understand other strategies (besides workarounds - seeking answers from numerous sources until you find the one that works best for your given situation) African American males have developed that enabled them to successfully navigate their educational experience.

Conclusion

Imagine for a moment that as a White male, you have been labeled and stereotyped throughout your life as academically challenged, disengaged and at risk as a student. You walked into your first college class and realize you are the only White male in the class. Once out of class you are constantly reminded that because of the color of your skin, people have been taught to fear you, lock their car door when you are standing on the curb waiting to cross the street, or question you when walking a African American female student to her car because it is dark when class finished. How would you feel? Would you engage other students in the class in conversation? To make matters worse your professor walks into the classroom and she is also a person from a different racial group. African American male students face this situation constantly in most of the classes they take on USA's and many other PWI campuses. Upon arriving in class, they immediately make a mental note and count the number of other Black students in the

room especially males, never expecting to see more than one or two other Black males in the classroom. It should be noted here that while PWI's are struggle to engage African American and other underrepresented students, Historically Black Colleges and Universities are noted for their high level of student engagement to ensure their students develop a level of trust and connectivity with their institution throughout their college careers and even later in life. It would appear that the 4 year graduation rates at HBCUs are no better for this population of students than the rates at PWIs; therefore, we must call for an overhaul of the systemic issues that exist and negatively impact our African American males throughout the educational system (from Pre-K through higher education).

It is difficult to fathom how after slavery was abolished, African Americans were recognized for educating themselves faster than any other race in that time period. Fast-forward to Fifty-nine (59) years ago, the state funded public institutions (3) developed admission and standardized testing criteria to minimize the number of Black students (particularly males) admitted to their institutions in response to the 1954 *Brown v Board* Supreme Court decision. The reason for this brief traverse back in history is simple, African American males have been studied more than any other demographic group in American history; their reported problems within the educational system played out constantly for all to see by broadcast media, scholarly reports and now accessible via the internet. I am mystified and profoundly dumbfounded that after fifty years of research, recommendations and programs developed to address the political, financial, and social issues impacting this group's ability to succeed educationally; we are no closer today

than we were 50, 60, or 70 years ago. This cannot be misconstrued as the African American male population reinventing themselves to remain in the depths of disparity. What population of people since the beginning of time has been desirous of constantly living under these conditions? Based upon the finding of this study, African American males are still defined, labeled, characterized, victimized, objectified and stereotyped as a fourth class citizens; citizens without hopes, without dreams, and therefore without a future.

Carter G. Woodson (2008) stated if you want to control a man, control his thinking. My understanding of that statement is simple, the best way to control a man/woman is to consistently point out her/his flaws, label the individuals and continue to remind them, that they are less than any other race in American. Build a system of education which for decades trained African Americans to perform subservient tasks for the dominant White population. A system structured to ensure White dominance for years to come by teaching African American children that they are substandard, and will never find comfort or experience the finer things in life.

Based upon years of scholarly research it appears that very little if anything has changed (educationally, politically, socially and financially) for African American males. The struggles outlined in previous research studies as well as this study still produce the same results and findings. It would appear that academic success for African American males is on a collision course with insanity (doomed to constantly repeat itself searching for different outcomes only to be left recycling the same information). No, I do not subscribe to this notion, however, the fact remains America has solved most of the

problems faced with the exception of the academic problems faced by African American males for fifty (50) plus years.

The volumns of data that have been collected on African American males; the vast knowledge available to assist in arriving at solutions to their issues are simply mindboggling. Perhaps that may be part of the problem, the information has intellectually anesthetized the American population to the point they have become emotionally and psychologically overwhelmed and incapable of addressing the issue. As a result of the findings in this study coupled with Feagin's (2010) white racial framing theory, it starts to make sense that the issues faced by African American males are in fact systemic. The system was designed to ensure that African American males would always remain the bottom of American culture. As scholars and educational leaders, if we believe in the philosophical approach that every child deserves the best education that we can afford to provide for them, then how can we sit idly by and allow African American male students to continue to be characterized in a manner that we know places them at a distinct disadvantage compared to their peers. Politicians, private and public professionals, educators, parents and the students are all calling for a change. Looking for solutions, yet failing to include all voices around the table discussing the real problems, not the ones involving victim blaming and framing that perpetuates the issues while never arriving at a solution.

Future projections regarding the demographic shift occuring across the nation, informs us that we need to start building an infrastructure to meet the student's needs upon matriculating to college. The knowledge and data needed to guide educators and

leaders to make the necessary changes, I believe currently exist in the volumns of research studies collected on African American males over the last 50 years. If American is to remain strong and competitive, we must invest in and commit to educating all children regardless to race, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, and gender.

We live in the United States of America, when called upon to go to war, we go representing one nation. The same approach must be applied to the educational system in America, otherwise we are doomed to continue conducting research developing potential solution and having those solutions relegated to the bookshelves lining the offices in educational institutions across America and around the globe. African American children and for that matter all children deserve a better lot in life than what is currently provided in our education system. It is time for educators, parents, students and every American to make a stand for equal education, equal access and equal treatment under the laws that govern us. But most of all, it is time we support each other as Americans.

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APPENDIX A
RESEARCH STUDY FLYER

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

We need participants for a research study:

No Longer Living In Silence from the Margins: African American Male College Student's Voices
Centralized and Powerful Regarding Their Engagement, Persistence and Graduation in Higher
Education

Description of Project: The purpose of this research study of African American Male College Students is to conduct face-to-face individual confidential interviews and a focus group session with the participants regarding their perspectives and experiences with the educational system(s) and how it impacts their ability to persist and graduate from college.

To Participate: You must be a currently enrolled African American male student, be at least 18 years old and be able to participate in a one (1) hour interview session. Participants will also be asked to engage in a one (1) hour focus group discussion. In the focus group setting you are being ask to engage with your peers in a discussion about your college experiences and perceptions as a group. The questions for the focus group session will be based upon data collected during the individual interview sessions. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be charged or paid for taking part in the study.

To learn more, please contact the principle investigator of the study, Rod Wyatt, at 336- 202-4952 or jrwyatt285@gmail.com or Dr. Leila Villaverde at levillav@uncg.edu.

This Research study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Leila Villaverde, Educational
Research Cultural Foundations Department, and has been reviewed and approved by the UNCG
Institutional Review Board.

Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study	Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study	Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study	Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study	Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study	Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study	Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study	Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study	Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study	Rod Wyatt – 336-202-4952 jrwyatt285@gmail.com– African American Male Research Study
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APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: No Longer Living In Silence from the Margins: African American Male College Student's Voices Centralized and Powerful Regarding Their Engagement, Persistence and Graduation in Higher Education

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor (if applicable): James "Rod" Wyatt and Dr. Leila Villaverde

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project. The focus of this research study is designed to add the missing voices of African American Male College students to the body of knowledge associated with the struggles of this population's persistence and graduation in the college. I am interested in how African American male college students perceive the educational system and how welcoming, accepting, and engaging it is for them. Your participation is voluntary.

Why are you asking me?

You must be at least 18 years old or older (max. 25) to participate in this study. You must be an African American males and currently enrolled college student.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

You will be asked to spend 45 minutes to an (1) hour in a taped interview session with the Principal Investigator (the researcher), answering a set of research questions and telling your academic story. Participants will also be asked to engage in a one (1) hour focus group discussion. In the focus group setting you are being ask to engage with your peers in a discussion about your college experiences and perceptions as a group. The questions for the focus group session will be based upon data collected during the individual interview sessions. The researcher cannot rule out the remote possibility that you may experience minimal stress based upon your experiences as a student attempting to navigate the educational process. However, every effort will be made to ensure your safety and welfare at all times during the interview process. You will not be required to perform any physical activity during the course of this interview. The researcher will not engage in any conduct designed to elicit or create a threatening environment for you, the participant.

Is there any audio/video recording?

The researcher will record digital audio tapes of all individual interview sessions conducted during this research study. These tapes will be transcribed and loaded into a computer program designed to pick out and analyze common themes and critical statements. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will limit access to the tape as described below. In an effort to limit access to the voice

recordings the researcher will lock this information in a locked file cabinet located in the researcher's office. After the study has been completed and finding documented, the digital recordings of your voice will be destroyed. Information collected during this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

What are the risks to me?

"The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. Participation in the interview(s)/focus group session is/are voluntary and you may stop them at any time. Additionally, if the participant should feel uncomfortable answering certain questions, you may choose not to respond to any questions you do not feel comfortable answering during the interview or focus group session. If you decide you no longer wish to participate in the study, please let the researcher know and you will be free to depart without fear of penalty or unfair treatment.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact James "Rod" Wyatt, (Principal Investigator) at 336-334-3241 or via email at jrwyatt285@gmail.com and/or Dr. Leila Villaverde, (Faculty Advisor) who may be reached at (336) 334-2475 or via email at levillav@uncg.edu.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits/risks associated with being in this study please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

By adding your voice (perceptions and experiences) to the general body of knowledge it may serve as a great contribution to the university and other scholars who are focused on correcting the persistence and graduation information on African American males.

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There is no cost for your participation in this study. Additionally, you will not be paid for participating.

How will you keep my information confidential?

Your privacy will be protected. Your identity and/or identifiable data and recordings will not be shared with anyone. Each participant will be provided a pseudonym/code number for use during the study. A master list containing the pseudonyms/code numbers will be maintained in a pass word protected file and will be stored separately from other data related to this study. The data, voice recordings, and all transcriptions will be stored in an encrypted password protected data file and stored in a locked file accessible only to the PI. I will endeavor to protect your confidentiality at all times throughout the duration of this study. All data (recordings, master list of pseudonyms and code numbers) obtaining to the participants engaged in the individual interviews and focus group sessions will be destroyed (Erased and or shredded) at the conclusion of this study. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.”

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form and completing an individual interview and focus group discussion activity you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older, a currently enrolled college student and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by James “Rod” Wyatt.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

DISSERTATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General Interview Questions

1. What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban Zip Code (Region of birth or residence)
2. If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in which you grew up?

Informal Questions

3. How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher education experience?
4. Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend?
5. What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college experience/education?
6. What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to education and your chances of success?
7. Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your professors and peers in class.

Knowledge Questions

8. Are there any academic support services available to you on campus?
9. How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab, advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university?
10. Have you take advantages of these support services, if no, why? If yes, what services did you use and why? Itemized list of services.
11. Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure?

12. Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college student?
13. Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What programs, concerts, recitals, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly participate in?
14. Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you would be interested in participating? Please explain.
15. Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true reflection of you as a person? Please explain.
16. Knowing what you know now, would you still select the college that you are now attending? If yes, please explain. If no, please explain.
17. What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
18. What could your college do to increase your chances of success?

APPENDIX D
FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Project Title: No Longer Living in Silence from the Margins: African American Male College Student's Voices Centralized Regarding Their Engagement, Persistence and Graduation

Consent Process

The consent forms for focus group participants will be the same as the one completed for the individualized interview sessions. Inasmuch as the consent document for both groups is the same, the principle investigator (James “Rod” Wyatt under the guidance of his Faculty Advisor, Dr. Leila Villaverde) will ensure participants understand the information in the consent form.

Protocol for Focus Group

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am very interested in hearing about your experience and perceptions of higher education as it relates to your persistence and graduation. Specifically, I am interested in how African American male college students perceive the educational system in regards to it being a welcoming, accepting and engaging environment in which to learn. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from this group session at any time without penalty.

- *The purpose of this study is to insert the voices of African American male college students into the scholarly research conducted on reasons why they are struggling to persist and graduate. A large proportion of the scholarly research does not include their voices in the studies that have been conducted. I firmly believe that until educators understand the lived educational experiences as perceived through the eyes of the African American male, we will continue to struggle with developing and creating appropriate programs and services to assist this population of students. I will use a sampling of African American male college students from a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) regarding how they perceive education through their lived experiences.*
- *The information you share in the focus group setting is completely confidential and will not be associated your name that can be linked back to you. All participates will be provided a pseudonym which will be used when reporting interview results.*

- *I will tape the focus group session to ensure I capture the thoughts, opinions and lived experiences of this group. No names will be attached to the focus group and the tapes will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed.*
- *You have the right to refuse to answer any question and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.*
- *I understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential. I respectfully request that participants respect each other's confidentiality.*
- *If you have questions now or after you have participated in the focus group session, please contact me or my faculty advisor whose names and phone numbers are located on the original consent document, of which you were provided a copy.*

Focus Group Timeline (This session is scheduled to last 1 to 1 and a half hours)

Introduction

1. Welcome

I will pass out sign-in sheets for the students to answer a couple of demographic questions (age, zip code, high school community (rural or urban), (prior to starting the session each participant will be assigned a number which will be matched with their names so the PI will be able to identify the person by their correct pseudonym).

Review of the following

- Who I am and What I am trying to do?
- What will be done with the information gathered in the focus group setting?
- Why I asked you to participate?
- Provide students with the opportunity to withdraw from the focus group session?

2. Explanation of the process

Ask the group if anyone has participated in a focus group before. Explain what I expect during this process with everyone being respectful when others are talking.

About focus groups

- I will learn from you (positive and negative);
- Not attempting to reach consensus, I am only gathering information from each person's perspective;
- Not looking for a laundry list, I am seeking a true reflection on your experiences as a college student; and
- In this project, I am doing both individualized interviews and a focus group discussion. The reason for using both of these tools is that we can get richer data from a smaller group of people participating in a focus group. This will allow me to understand the context behind the answers provided in the individual interview sessions and will help me explore topics and themes in greater detail than I could do in the individual settings.

Logistics

- Focus group will last about one to one and a half hours;
- Feel free to move around if needed; and
- Bathrooms are located through these doors to your right. The exit in case of an emergency is the stairs located next to the elevator.

3. Ground Rules

Ask the group to provide some basic ground rules. After they have brainstormed, I need to ensure the following are on the list of rules.

- Everyone should participate;
- Information discussed in the focus group must be kept confidential;
- Stay with the group and please don't have side conversations;
- Please turn off or silence all cell phones if possible; and
- Have fun in this process.

4. Ask group if there are any questions before we get started, and address those questions.

5. Turn on Tape Recorder

6. Introduction of Participants

- Go around the table: Year in College and where they were born

***Questions:**

1. Let's start the discussion by talking about why you decided to attend this university as opposed to others on your short lists out of high school? What were the major attractors for you in your decision making process?
2. How well do you feel like your high school experience prepared for college? What would you change to enhance the likelihood of your academic success (success being defined as persisting and ultimately graduating from college)?
3. What are the barriers and support services, if any, that create hardships or prevented you to/from successfully and fully engaging in your college experience/education? What were the support services that enabled you to successfully and fully engage in your college experience/education? (e.g., mentoring, study skills, extra-curricular activities, hostile classroom/campus environment, etc.)
4. Let's talk about your classroom experiences related to your opinions being valued by your professors and peers in the classroom setting. Was your opinions valued or do you feel they were ignored and passed over as not important? What could your institution do to increase your chances of success?
5. Understanding what you know now, would you still select the college you are currently attending? If yes, please explain. If No, please explain.

**These questions are subject to change based upon the data collected from the individual interview sessions. The researcher does not know what these questions will be at this time, because the individual interviews will not been conducted until the IRB process is approved.*

Possible Discussion Probes:

- *Oppressed*
- *I'm often Misunderstood*
- *If I voice an opinion I'm perceived as angry*
- *Intimidating*
- *Profiled by Police*
- *Run from location to location when seeking assistance*
- *Discriminated against*
- *Stereotyped as an athlete because I'm black*
- *Opinions Ignored in Class*
- *Disengaged*
- *Embarrassed in the classroom*
- *Camaraderie*
- *Drug Abuse/Use*
- *Familiar Difficulties*
- *Cultural Differences*
- *Mentors*
- *Faculty Engagement/Approachability*
- *Academic Support*
- *Student Advocacy Groups*

Closing Remarks and Comments

That concludes our focus group. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. If you have additional information that you did not get to say in the focus group, please feel free to send me an email at jrwyatt285@gmail.com or call me on my cell phone at (336) 202-4952.

1 APPENDIX E

2
3 INDIVIDUAL RAW INTERVIEW DATA
4

5 Interview Questions Keith

6 What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban)

7 **My particular experience, I wasn't involved in any groups in particular that prep you**
8 **for you know the college experience. I would mostly receive help from my older**
9 **brother and sister that had attended college. When it came to you know finding out**
10 **what I wanted to major in and what schools were available. I pretty much reached**
11 **out to a lot of my peers I ended up picking my top choices just based off of what I**
12 **knew from a lot of my classmates at the time you know they had told me in particular**
13 **about USA at the same time my sister went to UNC and I figured you know if I got**
14 **into a UNC program I would be in a pretty good place. Um didn't really know**
15 **exactly what I wanted to major in when I decided to come to USA. Um I knew I just**
16 **had a knack for computers and for using computers with business needs so by default**
17 **when I initially got accepted into USA I decided to major in computer science not**
18 **really knowing that that major was more so geared towards engineering and science**
19 **and things of that nature and I'm more so better at how technology is used within**
20 **business needs. Um so I got off to a uh challenging start when I first got to USA so I**
21 **guess I wasn't really prepped that well from my high school. Now it's nice to know**
22 **that my little brother who attends the same high school as me, he receives a little bit**
23 **more help from his guidance counselor he will be able to narrow out a major ahead of**
24 **time before coming to school and realizing what he wants to he doesn't know so I**
25 **guess we all learn from our mistakes. Urban coming from Charlotte you know I'm**
26 **from Brooklyn, NY so everything is sorta urban to me.**

27 If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in which
28 you grew up? **28227**

29 How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you
30 change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher
31 education experience? **I would have been nice if I would have been able to sit down**
32 **with my guidance counselor and identify my strengths and weaknesses. That would**
33 **have helped my have a wider choice of different schools out there. Um also knowing**
34 **what different schools had to offer for me, had I known that USA didn't have a stellar**
35 **basketball program or football team maybe my decision would have been a little bit**
36 **different um I kinda went into the whole college thing kinda blind. It seemed at that**
37 **time when I was in high school the goal was just to graduate and you know graduate**
38 **and that was a big thing from high school you**

39 know um college was more so seen as a privilege so just the guidance as far as
40 figuring out what school and what major would have been better for me instead of
41 having to go two and a half year within college and you know and realizing hey this is
42 not for me.

43 Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend? Based off of just
44 hearing from where my peers were going. I didn't necessarily wanna follow the same
45 footsteps as my sister cause she went to USA, I kinda wanted to blaze my own trail
46 but really just knowing that it was near A&T I had friends that were going to A&T
47 but I necessarily didn't want to go to the same school as them, I kinda wanted to
48 separate myself and go to a more diverse school I know that's one thing about USA
49 that stood out to me and um also when I came on different school visit my family
50 really like the scenery at USA and it just look like a warm and inviting place at the
51 time you know coming from Brooklyn NY

52 What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college
53 experience/education? Um I've experienced a lot of invisible barriers you know there
54 are some things or some difficulties that are set up within the university that I believe
55 that are sometimes placed without you even knowing. Um I know particularly for
56 myself um as a freshman coming in as a black male you know there were probably
57 20, 30, 40 guys that at the time that I knew and we were all really close but nobody
58 really reached out to us about as far as tutoring, or mentoring or things like that
59 kinda like what you would expect when you come to college its pretty much you know
60 you are paying to go to school so a lot of my friends paid that first or second semester
61 to fail um had I not gotten involved with an organization I myself probably would not
62 be here looking five years later back on my college experience um as far as like the
63 barriers go I think there are a lot of roadblocks you know you have to touch base
64 with so many different people there's no like streamline process you know maybe
65 when it comes to room reservations or event contracts or things like that it just seems
66 like they make it more challenging than inviting to really do stuff on campus. I
67 understand that there are rules and regulations but sometimes they are not
68 communicated well you know from leadership to student officials um so that
69 something um um I think that can definitely be worked on within the university you
70 know there's been times where I remember one night I got home from the library and
71 this is when I was living off campus and um I was living in campus crossing and you
72 know it was probably around 2:30am and I was exhausted and I was just sitting in
73 my car I happened to just get a BMW at the time and you know I'm sitting in my car
74 after getting home from the library and then I hear a knock on my window and I
75 realize it's a police officer so you know I'm sitting in my parking lot I'm like did I do
76 anything wrong you know I'm in the parking spot you know and then they
77 questioned me asking me whose car was this and why was I just sitting in the car and
78 I tried to explain you know that I lived in this building right here (laughs nervously)
79 so they made me check my license and realized that I was registered that I did live
80 where I was saying I lived at the time but little things like that just being spotted out
81 driving that you know probably wasn't mine but I faced many examples just like that

82 not really doing anything. So um there's still a lot of work to be done as far as like
 83 the equality I think here.
 84 What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to college
 85 education and your chances of success? Um I think the media plays a big role
 86 especially with the generation that we live in now between you know insta-gram,
 87 twitter, facebook. You don't see as much diversity as the campus preaches with those
 88 social medias um I feel like that can be used it can be used a lot better more
 89 effectively to reach out to especially the undergraduate students um because you
 90 literally have direct access you know the say way you can tweet a message about the
 91 school being closed that could be easily be used to you know send a message about
 92 you know an African American program that may be going on outside of February
 93 you know just little things like that um and just I feel like the communications from
 94 the campus to the students it could be a lot better if they knew exactly what our needs
 95 were and if they sat down and took some time to really see like hey why does it seem
 96 like you know after first and second semester we have so many you know African
 97 American males not returning you know what can we do to stop that. What can we
 98 do to encourage or retain these students more? I know that is something that my
 99 organization is looking into doing you know really trying to find a way to use mass
 100 media to connect with the campus and really figure out how we can keep more Black
 101 males in school you know and actually graduate from college not just get in college.
 102 Main stream media I don't necessarily watch too much tv or really play into a lot of
 103 media because they only show you what they want you to believe and things of that
 104 nature. I try to just educate myself and educate you know the people I keep around
 105 me. Um just through research, but um I'm not really too sure.
 106 Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your
 107 professors and peers in class. Um definitely something that I notice you know the first
 108 thing I usually do when I get in my class is count how many males are usually in my
 109 class and then on top of that how many black males and usually its about one or two
 110 of us you know depending on what course it is. And then um If I'm there I know that
 111 I have to be an example as far as you know just making sure I am on top of my
 112 grades and I'm participating and I just have to realize that I'm representing you
 113 know not only myself at the moment but you know almost my race at times when I'm
 114 in the classes, when I'm in these courses and I look around the room and I see nobody
 115 that looks like me. You know when I first got to school there were a lot more people
 116 that did look like me so as I progressed through my four or five year tenure here I've
 117 noticed that and kinda keep that in the back of my mind. Um I know in college your
 118 professors are not going to cater to your needs I know that they haven't catered to
 119 mine um unless I've reached out to them and showed them or took the initiative to
 120 show them hey I'm serious, you know um I'm trying to make something of myself um
 121 I've learned that it is much better to be proactive than reactive. Um I feel like my
 122 peers are, are, are sometimes necessarily I know from out the gate people may think
 123 that shy or that I don't like to be spoken too. Um and I'm not sure why that may
 124 tend to make people not wanna maybe pick the first seat to sit next to me or what not

125 in class. But usually once I open my mouth and I speak and people realize that I am a
 126 genuine person that usually breaks down that initial barrier.
 127 Are there any academic support services available to you on campus? There's a ton if
 128 you know where to look or if you have somebody to tell you. Um one big thing that
 129 opened my eyes to just the reality and realness of the real world out there that
 130 nobody is going to spoon feed you these things and all these opportunities like career
 131 services and the writing center or event just getting more involved with you know
 132 multicultural affairs or event just spending time just talking to people within campus
 133 and activities programs there are a lot of different resources out there but as a
 134 student nobody is going to come knocking at your doors and say hey you should join
 135 this, this and that you really have to go seek those opportunities um which is kinda
 136 like a good and bad thing because upon graduation nobody is going be offering you
 137 that dream job that you want you know you are either going to have to seek it,
 138 research it or even create that new job or that new organization on campus if you see
 139 the need for it.
 140 How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab,
 141 advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university? Um I've had a difficult
 142 journey as far as advising in particular. I want to say in my five years here I have
 143 had maybe 6 or 7 different advisors. Um some that changed semester to semester,
 144 year to year um I've changed schools as well so that also changed my advisor. After a
 145 while I just received my advising codes via email and um would have to figure out
 146 what classes to take myself. Um initially when I did have an advisor my first advisor,
 147 you know my freshman I took some extremely challenging classes you know Pre-
 148 Calculus, Chemistry, I don't know how I was able to start off with a 3.3 gpa. But then
 149 from learning from different advisors they told me that I don't know how you even
 150 made it this far maintaining a 3.0 GPA with the courses I had already taken. I've
 151 taken unnecessary classes, I've taken classes at the wrong time which ultimately
 152 pushed back my graduation day. Um so I would have much rather you know have
 153 one advisor just kinda to grow with that knew what my goals were and what my
 154 strengths were um I think that was one big challenge in particular. I didn't learn
 155 about a lot of resources until maybe you know I got a C on a paper and then
 156 professor said hey maybe you should try the writing center or something like that. A
 157 lot of things I learned was more so trial and error and then having those resources
 158 brought to my attention.
 159 Have you taken advantages of these support services? If no, why? If yes, what services did
 160 you use and why? Itemized list of services. Yes now I have um one thing in particular
 161 that I take advantage of a lot now is career services um I try to email LP shes' a big
 162 resource within the career services over in the Billings School. I was able to really
 163 express to her where I'm at now and where I would like to be in a few years and we
 164 were able to sit up a plan on what would be the steps for me to get there. I think that
 165 she saw something in me and she's always reaching out to me with different career
 166 opportunities whether I might be interested or not she always brings it to my
 167 attention um once again I had to go seek her out um and I was actually recommended
 168 to speak to her from Dr. V which was nice. I'm taking advantage of them more now

169 than I did my freshman, sophomore and junior year. I didn't receive much
170 information regarding support services in my early years until I told somebody and I
171 was put on a mailing list for that particular reason.

172 Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on
173 campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure? Yes I've
174 been able to uh have somewhat of a mentor now um someone to just kinda talk to if
175 I'm having a rough day or someone that actually able to point me in the right
176 direction of somebody that might be able to help me and that was through my
177 advisee for my student organization. So once again, if I had not become part of an
178 organization I would not have had access to a lot of the resources that I have today or
179 know the people that I know today on the campus.

180 Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college
181 student? Yes, it's very essential I believe that not only should you have someone that
182 is older than you and more experienced than you serve as a mentor I feel like you
183 should also mentor your peer you know being able to share your experiences things
184 that you may face on a day to day basis and of course being a mentor that is someone
185 that is younger than you.. That is something I do with my organization, we are over
186 at Pearce Elementary School and um we are also over a Grimsland High School we
187 have an initiative where we try to educate that younger high school students on not
188 only the points of graduating from high school but also going to college and
189 graduating from college as well. Um were actually fortunate enough to have a
190 member from our mentee program at Grimsland High school actually come to USA
191 and get involved with a student group and now the President of the Black Student
192 Society on campus. Um so it's always nice to see that effect from someone that you
193 may have mentored or a peer or just making your mentor proud in that regard.

194 Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What programs,
195 concerts, recitals, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly participate
196 in? Yes I took advantage of a lot of those/more of those activities. More so like
197 intramurals I played intramurals almost every year I want to say that's always been
198 fun. Um I don't necessarily want to say I have the most school spirit as far as like
199 attending concerts or things like that. When I first got to UAS the biggest team was
200 the soccer team and even that has kinda died down a lot over the years. People are
201 starting to gravitate towards the basketball a little bit more now but um there is still a
202 lack for a really true school spirit. At USA it's almost like a school where it's a ghost
203 town on the weekends where you know everybody seems to wants to go back home
204 you know at other universities that's not how it is. On Saturdays are football game
205 days and Sundays are basketball or whatever it is so that's the one thing that I do
206 kinda regret coming to USA really having that school spirit I don't see myself
207 investing in the class ring or something like that. I'm more so concerned about
208 getting this degree and moving on to the next journey in my life.

209 Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you
210 would be interested in participating? Please explain. I think the university itself as a
211 whole doesn't have as much as they could I know of some sub entities within the
212 university that has a ton of great things going on but they might not have the funding,

213 or the design , the marketing scheme to really reach out to the entire campus. And I
214 think that's something those groups in particular should be shown a lot more light on.
215 Even the smaller ones because there are a lot of great things that students are trying
216 to get done but don't have the funds or the exposure or that just don't know how to
217 go about getting their message across to the entire campus and can only really effect
218 one or two certain demographics but I think the university as a whole should be try to
219 find these small organizations and bring them to light and it's easy and can be done
220 very easily.

221 Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true
222 reflection of you as a person? Please explain. **Yes I know particularly there has been a**
223 **couple of times on campus where I might have been singled out just based off you**
224 **know of my appearance people may thing a certain way about me. Once again until I**
225 **open my mouth and show you know that I do have some type of formal upbringing or**
226 **education like I said earlier just sitting in my car in my parking lot, I was approached**
227 **by a police officer for**
228 **sitting in my car for too long after not getting out. You know just sitting down**
229 **collecting my thoughts in my car I was approached that memory will always stick**
230 **with me. It was a campus police officer and it was off campus. Here at USA it's**
231 **become almost acceptable if we get a crime alert by default we automatically it seems**
232 **as if the description usually is you know a black male 5'8; you know wearing a black**
233 **hoodie or something like that or sneaker and what's funny is you know not very often**
234 **is that person obtained and it usually happens right around the police station which is**
235 **funny. It's sad to say that its almost become acceptable in every instance there's a**
236 **gunman on USA's campus or somebody has just been robbed and you know um 9 out**
237 **of 10 times you can place that description on a black male even without anybody**
238 **seeing them. I feel like we have this target on your back you know if you are in the**
239 **wrong place at the wrong time someone could call the police and say I have found the**
240 **guy that you're looking for just based on that same description that describes me and**
241 **all my friends so I could be walking on Tatum street getting a pizza and you know I**
242 **could be approached, I haven't but I'm pretty sure some has been misjudged based**
243 **on that description it's used so regularly and its funny because it has become so**
244 **acceptable over time.**

245 Knowing what you know now, would you still select the college that you are now
246 attending? If Yes, please explain. If No, please explain. **Knowing what I know now I**
247 **would still probably go here just because I know that at the end of the day I can say**
248 **that I have overcome you know tons of different diversities here. Maybe I could have**
249 **had a better experience academically and socially at another university but I know**
250 **that the things I have endured here are the things that are going to prepare me for**
251 **the real life. Now will I be the first to say hey you need to send your son or daughter**
252 **to USA probably not you know I'm going to have those conversations with my family**
253 **members, my younger brothers I tell them to do their research really find out how**
254 **students like where they're at now if the enjoy being on campus if the campus is truly**
255 **welcoming and inviting to them and I'll say go for it. If they feel USA is the place for**

256 them, then by all means I don't want to crush anybody else's dreams but I know for
257 me in particular I could have been better off somewhere else.

258 What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
259 Um I know now that time management is one of the big things I could have worked
260 on. Freshmen year I had all the time in the world to do anything but I didn't do
261 much other than go to the rec and go to class. But I should have gotten involved a lot
262 earlier as I am now I feel like I would have been able to network and built a better
263 network of peers. And also I wish I would have built a better relationship with my
264 professors as well because the professors here they know a lot and they are well
265 connected and I think that's one thing that I could have definitely improved upon um
266 just building more relationship among the student faculty being more known among
267 the student and faculty. Maybe even getting a little more involved with the like SGA,
268 people that do can help make decisions because are provided the funds and they have
269 those inside resources um so I would probably say getting more involved with my
270 professors and the university as a whole and trying to make more change now instead
271 of trying to wait until my last years.

272 What could your college do to increase your chances of success? I think the university
273 from the start where I got mis-tracked or misguided was definitely through my
274 advisors, I think going through six-seven advisors I don't even know the number now
275 and I don't even know who my advisor is right now (laughs). I just know I am on
276 pace to graduate I've applied to graduate. I think that developing that relationship
277 with an advisor that really cares you know really sits down and said hey tell me about
278 yourself not necessarily what's your major um I think that's one thing that could
279 definitely put a student on a better path or guideline throughout their college career
280 and then maintaining and stabilizing that I think that within the university a lot of
281 my advisors have got fired or moved to a different position so I think from that aspect
282 that would have made my journey a little bit more successful. Someone who touched
283 base with their individuals who they have been assigned to not when it's time to send
284 out a code for advising. Shooting email here and there or maybe even reach out via
285 phone call or just providing that individual with possible opportunities that they may
286 be interested in. I think those are things that I definitely missed out on and still there
287 comes a point when you are not even required to meet with your advisor to register
288 for classes and things like that I want to say around your sophomore or junior year
289 that they just throw you out there to the wolves and that's usually when student
290 register for the wrong classes then their graduation date gets pushed back or you
291 know they take a class they don't even need, but I have still managed to hold onto my
292 3.0 and I plan on doing that until I graduate.

What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban)
High School setting I went to North Rowan I would say it was a mix between urban and rural because at the same time you had urban kids that were on welfare maybe section 8 but you had some students who were doing substantially well that had land that their family owned so I think it was a mix of both.

If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in which you grew up? **28144**

How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher education experience? **I don't think my high school experience prepared me well for the college experience until my 12th grade year and the only reason I think they pursued it was because of my high GPA. I feel as if the students who didn't have a substantial GPA kinda got left out of the movement therefore, saying to kinda grasp with people that didn't have a substantial GPA because they may be able to do well in college. I don't think that their high school GPA defined how smart or how educated they were.**

Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend? **I selected my undergraduate university because I did my research on the Bryant school and knew they had a great criteria such as the account major which I am majoring in. I did research on it and it had really great reviews a lot of companies do recruiting from the Bryan school so I thought it would be a great school to study in. I looked at UNC Charlotte.**

What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college experience/education? **I don't think there are any barriers that can prevent me but there are some that can slow me down or discourage me in the institution such as having professors that are the same race as me or that have the same life experiences as me. I don't think they can prevent me from learning I think that is something we have to adapt to and I think for a lot students that is a culture shock.**

What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to college education and your chances of success? **The media definitely plays a great role. I think as African Americans a lot of us are presumed to be only be entertainers or sports players and I've been seeing this since youth age. I know a lot of successful black people are not portrayed in the media such as CEOs or corporate America leaders or even people in institutions that are not portrayed in the media so it kinda deviates or keeps the youth from realizing their full potential because they cannot see it. (referring to successful African Americans in mainstream America that could serve as potential inspirations for black youth)**

Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your professors and peers in class. **The professors I think all in all is a general agreement and understanding that we are all students and I hope they don't see me for my color. But I know that a lot of times that I make a good statement or something that some**

43 may not expect me to say, I kinda get this look from the audience or my other
 44 students my peers more than I get it from the professor that oh maybe they didn't
 45 think that because I am black that I could understand it to the caliber of the question
 46 that I answered it. The group project is basically the same thing. A lot of... since it's
 47 such a diverse university the groups are plenty diverse that I work with, European,
 48 foreign students, I work with Caucasians from American but all in all basically the
 49 same thing I said on the last question. When you are working with a group
 50 sometimes they look at you like I didn't know that you understood it that well or like
 51 I didn't know that black people could do it to the capacity that you take it too. So it's
 52 kinda an eye opener for me and the people that I work with within the group.
 53 Are there any academic support services available to you on campus? Yes there is plenty
 54 available. Um we have our advisors, we have the career services, we have the writing
 55 center, there's plenty of things you can get involved with. You have people to help
 56 you get involved internships. I think we do have a lot of good resources on campus.
 57 How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab,
 58 advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university? A lot you have to find on
 59 the school website. I don't think it's disclosed as well as it should be as far as verbally
 60 or presented to the student body and it definitely could be promoted more but a lot of
 61 it you really have to search to find or kinda through networking.
 62 Have you taken advantages of these support services? If no, why? If yes, what services did
 63 you use and why? Itemized list of services. I definitely used the Career Services to my
 64 advantage to prepare and build my resume during my time here. I used the writing
 65 center to get through my English 101 college writing course to help me sustain and
 66 really just prepare my writing in general because I didn't get that education as
 67 thoroughly as I should have in high school.
 68 Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on
 69 campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure? I have
 70 developed a thorough relationship I would say with a mentor on campus that really
 71 does understand the institution and who is helping me understand the way to get
 72 through and that I am getting the best of my time for the money I am spending to get
 73 my educations and make sure I am staying on course to keep my GPA where it needs
 74 to be and to make sure I'm getting a thorough education that I need that wasn't
 75 provided anywhere else on campus
 76 Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college
 77 student? I think it definitely is its kinda just completing this you have a vision you
 78 have someone who has been through it and kinda know the ropes to help you through
 79 it at the same time it's kinda the same as having a coach as if you were playing in a
 80 football or a basketball game. You could be out there battling back and forth and not
 81 get anywhere if you don't have somebody outside of the game that's coaching you and
 82 letting you know which way you need to head in.
 83 Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What programs,
 84 concerts, recitals, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly participate
 85 in? Ok as far as groups I am in the NEO Black Society and the group Growing
 86 Young Men and we have a meeting every Monday at 6pm where we discuss social

87 issues and racial issues in America and it helped me build the persona of who I am,
88 and where I came from and once I know who I am, I can build on the who I want to
89 become. Extracurricular activities I have been to a couple of the soccer games I
90 haven't been to anything else as far as that. I have been to some of the concerts we
91 have, the homecoming events we have on campus, but the one thing I have noticed
92 while being all of these events, with it being one of the most diverse schools in the
93 country, it still has racial boundaries. Such as attending the soccer games you have a
94 sections where predominantly African Americans or black students sit, you have a
95 section where the Caucasians or white people sit and then you have a section where
96 the foreign students sits because it is racially divided. Not because its sectioned off
97 but its sectioned off in our minds and how we've been instituted to believe to think
98 how it should be. The same for the cafeteria, if you go into the cafeteria it's still
99 racially divided. You have the black section, you have the white section and you have
100 the foreign section. Even todays time being 2014, there's no racial separation
101 physically, no ropes or no lines saying this is the black side and this is the white side
102 but this is the way that our minds have consumed it and this is the way we perceive it
103 should be.

104 Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you
105 would be interested in participating? Please explain. **Culturally relevant oh man I don't**
106 **think they provide as much as they should. We have African American studies, we**
107 **have certain organizations on campus that are geared towards African Americans.**
108 **But I think we can go into a deeper sense of really understanding African Americans**
109 **and where we come from. Looking deeper into it not thinking of African Americans**
110 **history starting at slavery I know that a lot of African Americans we believe that is**
111 **where our history begins really digging into the African roots, BCE and before that**
112 **when the Africans were dealing with the Greeks and before that we even, before the**
113 **western front was ever founded before we ever knew what was in the Americas as an**
114 **institution we don't dig that deep into looking into it.**

115 Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true
116 reflection of you as a person? Please explain. **Me personally I have not. Personally I**
117 **have not had a police incident on campus but a lot of the police alerts that I get to my**
118 **email and my cell phone do categorize me. Even if I don't have anything to do with**
119 **it. Nine times out of ten it's a black male, six feet or above, my height my weight even**
120 **if I didn't have anything to do with it anyone could look at the description someone**
121 **could point the finger and say I'm the one that did it. So as far as that I think there is**
122 **a lot of stereotypes and as far as the crimes that are committed on campus or close to**
123 **the campus automatically you assume it was a six foot black guy. They put us, I**
124 **wouldn't say in this danger zone, but it kinda creates this stereotypical when someone**
125 **thinks of a crime that is the first person they see. Me being the man that I am I don't**
126 **think that I am a criminal, I'm far from one so I don't think I should fit into that type**
127 **of stereotype that's created from the police alerts.**

128 Knowing what you know now, would you still select the college that you are now
129 attending? If Yes, please explain. If No, please explain. **Yes I would still attend USA**
130 **even after my two years of experience here. Even though it's the most diverse school**

131 we still have these racial boundaries and they let us know that racism is still here in
132 2014 and still available. Not through the laws that we have or the constitution or the
133 amendments but more so it's embedded into our minds now and as youth growing up
134 in this day and time we still see these racial lines after the laws that prohibit them. So
135 I would still definitely attend this institution just to see at one of the most diverse
136 institutions in American there are still racial boundaries. It's not at an HBCU it's
137 here at a most diverse university so I would still attend USA
138 What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
139 Work ethic, I don't think I would or could change anything that would enhance it I
140 would still apply the work ethic that I have but the one thing I would change about
141 myself is cultural perspective. Understanding African Americans, understanding
142 myself and understanding the situation that I am put in and what was in place on the
143 African American generations before me more thoroughly so I can do more to make
144 a change and change these stereotypes that society has about us that I may not
145 perceive that may still be there outside of my day to day activities so kinda just
146 exploring the African American challenges that we have overcome and the challenges
147 that we still need to overcome today.
148 What could your college do to increase your chances of success? Um recently looking at
149 a few articles online I understand that African American studies is not a required
150 course. Being part of the African American culture I think it should be required
151 seeing that we are a growing population here have been the minority the youth being
152 mostly and in the future will be from a minority sense, vs the majority because their
153 birth rate is lower than ours so I think it should be a minority studies course should
154 be required as much as general history is required or American history is required.
155 Because we played an essential part building this country so why not understand the
156 people that help build what you have before you today?

1

2 What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban)

3 **Urban**

4 If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in which
5 you grew up? **27406**

6 How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you
7 change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher
8 education experience? **I don't feel as if the school itself prepared me for college um I**
9 **had a teacher there his name was Ateba Thea and he was one of three African**
10 **American teachers there and he taught a marketing class, he wanted to reach out and**
11 **try to you know help African American males to further them to higher education**
12 **and mentor us to prepare them for college and you know doe some to get them**
13 **through high school. But I feel like if it wasn't for him, if I never would have met**
14 **him, then I wouldn't have been prepared for college at all.**

15 Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend? **Let's see, I**
16 **applied to UNC Charlotte and I didn't get in, I think it was because I applied too late.**
17 **I applied to East Carolina and I got in, A&T and I got in and USA. I didn't want to**
18 **go to East Carolina because they didn't give me a lot of money for my financial aid**
19 **and I felt like it was very far away from where I stayed. Um I really wanted to go to**
20 **Charlotte so I was like well you know let me try USA. I didn't go to A&T because I**
21 **knew about A&T I'm from Anytown so you know homecomings I know a lot of my**
22 **parents their friends went to A&T and I know people that were in a higher grade**
23 **than me High School went to A&T and I just felt like it had a bad rep as being more**
24 **concerned about their look and more concerned about you know everything other**
25 **than academics. So I said I didn't want to be around that environment and**
26 **atmosphere so I decided to go to USA. I visited USA that was the only one. I felt like**
27 **I didn't need to visit A&T because I'm from Anytown and I was up there a lot just**
28 **you know being around and I felt like I didn't need too.**

29 What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college
30 experience/education? **I don't feel like I have but I don't want to think too hard to find**
31 **a barrier.**

32 What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to college
 33 education and your chances of success? **Ok, Uh I just feel like I have to you know**
 34 **work even harder, just because the media has portrays us in a bad way as far as us**
 35 **going to college and us going to school. Um so I just feel like I have to work even**
 36 **harder to you know prevent the media or just people in general from putting me in**
 37 **that category. Um I just, I felt like when I was in High School I was around the right**
 38 **people um I did go to a predominantly white high school, it was very diverse but it**
 39 **was also predominantly white. Um and like I said if I didn't meet my teacher there**
 40 **which I met him through my brother he's at NC State, he also motivated me to when**
 41 **I was in high school to take the challenging classes because I was smart well I am**
 42 **smart and you know he challenged me to take AP and Honors level classes, he's at**
 43 **NC State right now and he's the one that introduced me to that teacher so if it wasn't**
 44 **for those two factors then I felt like I would have been in a boat like the rest of what**
 45 **the media portrays us as African Americans. Which is sad to say but at the same**
 46 **time you know everybody doesn't get that; a lot of people don't get the opportunity to**
 47 **meet African American males that want to better society and better their race you**
 48 **know.**
 49 Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your
 50 professors and peers in class. **Ummm I feel like now that, now that I am in my major**
 51 **classes I feel like its valued a lot more just because you know we're at that level where**
 52 **its serious now you know you need this in order to graduate. At the same time I am a**
 53 **finance major and an econ. minor and I don't really see too many African American**
 54 **males in my courses so um you know in a lot of the students or peers in my classes are**
 55 **older I felt that they are a lot older they already have jobs they just come back to take**
 56 **classes. I do feel like once you get up to your major level classes you are more valued**
 57 **um which also says that you know if you don't make it up to you know those major**
 58 **level classes, then you were not valuing those classes beforehand so its I would say**
 59 **that you would not be able to value those classes you prereqs. and general education**
 60 **classes if you didn't value those enough to get to your major classes. Um let me just**
 61 **think back umm I feel it was more so you know we would have you know to engage**
 62 **our professors more than they would engage me. Um I do answer questions but at**
 63 **the same time I do feel less confident knowing that I am one of two African American**
 64 **males in the class. Um so it does kinda you know lower my confidence just a little bit.**
 65 **But at the same time I try my best to build upon my confidence just by doing my**
 66 **work and making sure I know the material so I can answer questions. The students**
 67 **in the class room engage me, they do, they do.**
 68 Are there any academic support services available to you on campus? **Yes, which I have**
 69 **used plenty of times um the student academic success center, the writing center and**
 70 **it's another one that I cannot think of.**

71 How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab,
 72 advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university? **I was made aware of them**
 73 **in the very beginning of when I came to college. What my goal was to try to**
 74 **familiarize myself with every type of resources that I could to help better myself**
 75 **because I knew I was at the bottom of the totem pole and I had to work my way up**
 76 **since I was at a predominantly white school and that was the same mindset I had**
 77 **when I was in high school. So when I first got here I was in uh it was African**
 78 **American mentoring program that showed you like the resources they had the school,**
 79 **it was umm a program they did it like before school like two weeks before school oh**
 80 **link up it was called link up. I was in that, I signed up for it myself because I felt like**
 81 **it was a great opportunity for me to get familiarized with the university and try to get**
 82 **a step ahead of everybody else. Um so that really helped me out a lot with knowing**
 83 **everything you know on campus. If it wasn't for that then I feel like you know it**
 84 **would hard for me to find out about those resources that would help my academics.**
 85 Have you taken advantages of these support services? If no, why? If yes, what services did
 86 you use and why? Itemized list of services.
 87 Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on
 88 campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure? **I don't**
 89 **think so in my opinion but I feel like that was on me. Um because I haven't really**
 90 **reached out like I should have um to do that. But I've been relying on my peers a lot**
 91 **because it's hard to try to find someone that you can try to build that bond with you**
 92 **know African American male on campus you can build that bond with and um you**
 93 **know call them your mentor that would help you through college and after college**
 94 **through graduation. So I've just really been relying on my peers so far.**
 95 Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college
 96 student? Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What
 97 programs, concerts, recitals, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly
 98 participate in? **The Black Business Student's Association, I played intramural**
 99 **basketball, and flag football, the Black student union, and a couple of others**
 100 **including the Link Up Mentoring program. That's all I can think of off the top of my**
 101 **head. I also had to work during my time in college. It's pretty difficult; I started**
 102 **seeing my grades drop once I started working. It could have been the shift I was**
 103 **working which was kinda the slave shift because I was working the 7-11 shift at night**
 104 **which is the longest shift um we have at my job and I would work that six days out of**
 105 **the week. Um so I feel like and then you know during the day I was going to meetings**
 106 **and everything and class so really a lot of time the only time I had to study and do my**
 107 **work was after I got off work so I would be up late a lot of nights getting my work**
 108 **done.**

109 Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you
110 would be interested in participating? Please explain. **Yes and no um I say yes because I**
111 **know CAB (Campus Activity Board) is predominantly black so a lot of the activities**
112 **and programs that they have and events that they have are a lot of times geared**
113 **towards the African American population on campus. But outside of that no, I would**
114 **say the multicultural center does in a way but I wouldn't say it is as consistent as it**
115 **could be.**

116 Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true
117 reflection of you as a person? Please explain. **Um I can't think of anything off the top of**
118 **my head right now. But I am pretty sure there have been. I feel like I kinda brush it**
119 **off just because you know I just don't want to think about it but I know there has**
120 **been I just really brush it off but there hasn't been anything really, really serious if it**
121 **was I would have remembered it. But I know it has been, I just don't remember any**
122 **right now and I usually just brush it off and try to get it out of my head and move on.**

123 Knowing what you know now, would you still select the college that you are now
124 attending? If Yes, please explain. If No, please explain. **Yes and no. I would say yes**
125 **because I was around the right people at the time and before college that allowed me**
126 **to make my decision and you know even while in college it still had an impact on me**
127 **and got me where I am here today. But if those influences were not there I wouldn't**
128 **have choose USA. I think I have only been to like one or two academic advising**
129 **sessions. I don't really like the academic advising because I feel like they don't help**
130 **you like they should help you. It's just something they have to do, it's just a job they**
131 **just do it just to do it. I feel like they don't generally want to try to help you out and**
132 **find out what you need to graduate and what classes to take so I have tried my best to**
133 **avoid going to an advisor and I just you know look at my degree evaluations or I just**
134 **figure it out myself what classes I need to take and what I need to know about**
135 **fulfilling my requirements to graduate.**

136 What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
137 **Um being a people person. Being sociable because um a lot of times I catch myself**
138 **just talking to individuals, my peers, my friends uhh I think a lot of time not wasted**
139 **but I could be you know using that time to focus on or do my school work or other**
140 **things I need to do. I'm not saying I don't want to be a people person, I feel like I am**
141 **too much of a people person.**

142 What could your college do to increase your chances of success? **They could which I**
143 **think they are starting to do now, but I feel like every residence hall needs a learning**
144 **community um I feel like that helped me out a lot. If I wasn't in a learning**
145 **community then I wouldn't have known about a lot of stuff that we have on campus**
146 **for student that could help with your success in college. So I feel like, I know a lot of**
147 **people that were not in learning communities or like the FFL if they were not in those**
148 **things they are not in school any more. Majority of them are not here because of**
149 **academics. They just got distracted. For African American males the main reasons**
150 **was females and another one was video games spending a lot of time playing video**
151 **games. Anything other than academics on a priority scale academics were very low**
152 **just because I feel like it was so much freedom they just pushed it aside and said I will**
153 **get to it later it's not a big deal but then eventually their grades started to drop and**
154 **you know they were not in school anymore. But it could be other factors involved but**
155 **I feel like the main ones were females and video games and going out a lot. Um and**
156 **just not really focusing or I mean not putting as much focus as they needed to, to be**
157 **successful in college to work towards their degree. I can't think of anything else that**
158 **I would include.**

Interview Questions Bill

What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban)

Urban

If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in which you grew up? **27713**

How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher education experience? **Uh my high school experience prepared me well for my**

freshman year of college. Definitely gave me the independence, I was in the international baccalaureate program and um that program it starts your freshman year technically, but you don't get into the nitty griddy until your junior year and the majority of it was putting you on um independent study path where teachers don't really give you A, B, C, or D, you have to come up with the answer yourself.

Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend? **I chose USA because of the reputation of the school of music. Um my sister went here also so I um got exposed to it when she first went here as a freshman and uhh my high school band director actually attended here when he got his master degree, so I have a couple of influences, but nobody really actually said you should go to USA it was more like I had an ahhh – haaa moment like they are number one in the state if I can get in why not go so I got in so I'm here. But I didn't visit in terms of making a decision. I visited to visit my sister, not make a decision about the university.**

What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college experience/education? **Here just maybe the workload just a little bit. I feel like I feel like I have been able to take well advantage of all of the academic aspect here um with the music program that I am in here cause it is a very strenuous program and I do feel like I am going to come out very well prepared um but I think that sometimes the workload is a little more than the social life I coulda had while I was here in the past four years. I think more towards my junior and senior year of school I've been able to take a little bit more advantage of my social life but before that most of it was just majority of school and work so.**

What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to college education and your chances of success? **Uhhh those messages in the media I honestly look as those as just a viewpoint like that's just a viewpoint that society or maybe the people on my campus may look at me as but I don't take it as a view point for myself I take it as like a challenge that I have to overcome basically it's like um its um to my I really do just view it as something I carry around just like the shirt I'm wearing no matter what I just feel like I'm going to always be wearing this shirt. I may see this shirt one way but wherever else I go somebody else is going to view it a different way so I'm constantly having to um behave in a way that my shirt doesn't dictate who I am.**

Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your professors and peers in class. **Majority of my professors I would say (clears his throat) I'm mostly a student umm especially coming from a high school that was**

45 predominantly black, umm historically black high school where with pretty much all
 46 my teachers whether they were black or white I really had like a personal connection
 47 with um coming to you know a university style and being in a class room I definitely
 48 feel like I'm more just an academic student to them and like point blank that's all
 49 that matters I mean some of them some of them do go just a little bit beyond that and
 50 really care about your personal life and things like that but I have not had much of a
 51 connection with professors like I did in high school other than Dr. C umm who does
 52 happen to be he's Caucasian, he's not African American but he is somebody that I
 53 will say outside of my other professors really uhh dug deeper than just uh you're
 54 good ok you know did you get that paper done or like I really think he really does
 55 care about your health and umm your well-being outside of that. In terms of my
 56 peers um (clears throat) in my music classes I think um sometimes I think I'm viewed
 57 as oh it's just another black guy like um like sometimes because in the music building
 58 I'm like the rest of campus, the campus is a very diverse campus overall, but in the
 59 music building African Americans are far and few in-between so I think sometimes in
 60 class I'm looked at as in you know oh you must be different, you know like you are
 61 not the typical black guy because you are in here or um (clears throat) sometimes I
 62 am given the typical black guy stereotype you know like sometimes people make
 63 comments like about oh you're so proper like you know it's just it's very interesting
 64 you know to see how just because there are very few of us in the music building how
 65 I'm perceived by my peers and then there are definitely peers that you know there is
 66 no differences than the person sitting to the right of them.
 67 Are there any academic support services available to you on campus? Um well I feel like
 68 being around group of African American men that are on the same campus with me
 69 that are here trying to do the same thing which is graduate I would definitely say
 70 that's been a huge support system. Just having somebody else say man we gotta do
 71 homework you know (clears throat) we can't, we can't go party or we can't go do this
 72 right now or you know I'm about to go to the library, you want to do to the library
 73 with me or things like that um in terms of other academic support systems um no I
 74 don't think I've taken much advantage of them no. I knew about some of them, I
 75 know there's students first um but that's about it.
 76 How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab,
 77 advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university? Um I have taken
 78 advantage of the writing center and um I've never had a tutor, I've always used just
 79 my professors office hours um and in most of the classes that I have they don't have
 80 tutors for music courses, Its pretty much just go to your professors um office hours
 81 but outside of that I've used the writing center I have never used the speaking center
 82 and I would say I know about those things because of my peer academic leader job
 83 and I'm a teacher assistant in first year student classrooms in FFL class basically.
 84 That class is what exposes incoming freshmen to all of the different support systems
 85 you have on campus because I've done these I'm about to start my third one, I've
 86 seen the information multiple times but I never took advantage of the FFL classes
 87 when I came to school.

88 Have you taken advantages of these support services? If no, why? If yes, what services did
 89 you use and why? Itemized list of services.

90 Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on
 91 campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure? **Not**
 92 **officially I have plenty of people who were basically like mentors so just like people**
 93 **here they just came and went. One of them was my professor Dr. C um cause he**
 94 **outside of my other professors he was definitely somebody that really cared about you**
 95 **more than just a student in the classroom he would ask about how my day is you**
 96 **know whether or not my relationship was going well how are my parents how's my**
 97 **family, he would even ask about my old high school band director. Um definitely**
 98 **would make sure that um my work was balanced with my school work and even some**
 99 **days I have private lessons with him and some days he would actually cancel my**
 100 **private lessons for me to go finish up on school work so I would definitely say he was**
 101 **somebody who cared about me outside of just an academic student.**

102 Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college
 103 student? **Not really my um peer relationships are most important.**

104 Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What programs,
 105 concerts, recitals, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly participate
 106 in? **Um I have done intramurals with basketball and two greek organizations Phi Mu**
 107 **Alpha which is a music organization and Alpha Phi Alpha and uh peer academic**
 108 **leader, I've been employed on campus um all these experiences have pretty much**
 109 **been pretty positive um in terms of doing these activities I would definitely say they**
 110 **often enhanced my academic experiences I've been going through, I'm also a**
 111 **Teaching Fellow um that actually has played a big role because even though that's**
 112 **counted as State offered but um being a teaching fellow has definitely put me**
 113 **somewhat of a step ahead of all of the education majors here at USA. Um there were**
 114 **definitely experiences that were offered and made available to students who were**
 115 **teaching fellows that were not necessarily um given to other students who were not**
 116 **teaching fellows, not necessarily that other students could not take advantage of them**
 117 **but we had somebody, I had somebody that would organize me going into a class here**
 118 **in Anytown versus a regular education student may not have somebody there saying**
 119 **you're going to so-and-so class every Friday between 12 o'clock and 2 o'clock so there**
 120 **were opportunities that were available for me that were not necessarily available to**
 121 **everyone else.**

122 Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you
 123 would be interested in participating? Please explain. **Yeah, I would definitely agree**
 124 **with that. Um I feel like um the comedy show used to be one of those things um,**
 125 **Kevin Hart was the main homecoming comedy show. The past few Comedy Shows I**
 126 **have been to it was hit or miss some were good some not so good. Um the concerts, I**
 127 **have not really attended the concerts so I can talk much about that other than the**
 128 **USA's music concerts and those I like umm them but it's not necessarily part of what**
 129 **I would call my culture. Umm the one event I would definitely say I really enjoyed**
 130 **that I felt like I actually invited my entire family to was the Dr. Maya Angelo event**
 131 **that happened in Hemmingway Auditorium. Definitely anything NPHC related um**

132 I've attended many of those event, even um some events outside of NPHC related to
133 greek life I would definitely say were geared towards men of light.
134 Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true
135 reflection of you as a person? Please explain. Um well I would definitely say the alerts
136 that you get from the police officers the emails and even the text messages that you
137 get um just reading the messages they are very vague and often times are committed
138 by African American males and it will have a very brief descriptions and often time I
139 could very well fit the descriptions even though I am nowhere near the scene of the
140 crime or anything at all so its kinda like what if I decided I did wanna go out and get
141 something to eat now it kinda like I've gotta be aware of my surroundings like is
142 somebody going to snatch me up or am I gonna get questioned or anything like that
143 um and I can't say that I have had any experiences like that with students um but I
144 definitely do feel like there is a view on us whenever those types of alerts go out and
145 it's late at night that if you know if I am not somebody that they recognize I think
146 that there is an awareness that I'm there. I have actually been stopped by the police
147 three times (laughs) uhh the, the first two times, I feel like the first time he claimed
148 that I turned left at the red light and I felt that I had turned before the light changed
149 to the red and I did happen to have five other people who were African American
150 males in the car, I drive a minivan so I can hold a lot of people. Now I was driving
151 because I was the only one who was sober. Everybody else had some type of alcohol
152 or liquor in their system and there actually happened to be a cup in the car but the
153 cup was empty. The officer was a white male did approach the car and he actually
154 asked to smell the cup we let him smell the cup and it smelled like liquor, but the cup
155 was empty and he asked me if I had been drinking I even offered to take the alcohol
156 test, the sobriety test you know anything and he said no, no, no, no, no then he walked
157 back to the car and came back with my ticket and said you know that I was in
158 violation of the traffic laws that I had turned left on the red. The second time I did a
159 rolling stop that one per say I do feel I did the rolling stop. He was in the right of
160 giving me the ticket. I feel like he didn't have to I didn't feel like he had to be as
161 serious or harsh about it because it wasn't a big intersection it was within a
162 neighborhood actually but it was within Sebastian Village. Predominantly an African
163 American neighborhood um because it was right next to an HBCU and he was a
164 white male officer um and uhh I mean he wasn't he still did his job basically he was
165 within the rights of his job uhh but at the same time he could have been a little more
166 lenient maybe I didn't think it was that serious but anyway. The third time um I was
167 at um long story short it was a hit and run and I actually wasn't even the one that um
168 hit anybody the car actually hit me and but if you leave the scene of the crime if you
169 leave the scene of an accident period you're automatically charged with hit and run
170 regardless of whether you did the hitting or not but the reason I left was my car
171 wasn't damaged at all so I was thinking oh well for him (laughs) I had a lot of other
172 stuff going on and I wasn't aware that if you left you know that you would get
173 charged with anything like that but about 10 minutes later the police pulled me over
174 and one thing about Anytown police vs Sometown Police one car will pull you over
175 but within 30 seconds before that car, before that officer approaches the car there's

176 five others behind it regardless of what you're being pulled over for. Um so that first
177 time I was pulled over it ended up being three cops it was down town and there was
178 three cops pulled up behind him but they never got out of their car. Um the other one
179 in Sebastian Village nobody else showed up but um the one with the hit and run there
180 was six cops, like cop cars just lined up behind after, and this was before the first cop
181 even approached the car. So one cop approached the car and I had somebody else in
182 the car they questioned us both and then they separated you and question you. So I
183 had a White female officer standing there talking to me while they were questioning
184 my friend who was sitting on the sidewalk um she was sitting there telling me that
185 you didn't have to leave the scene of the crime and that was a stupid decision and now
186 you are going to go home with a felony and all this other stuff and blah, blah blah. I
187 didn't really know if a hit and run was a felony but I'm thinking that's really not that
188 serious of a crime for it to be a felony and um after talking with my father about it he
189 was like yeah they probably thought you had drugs or a gun on you and um even in
190 my mind even after him telling me that because they did search my car. I did let
191 them search my car, they tore up everything, they pulled everything out dumped bags
192 out everything my car was a mess. A week after I got pulled over I kept hearing
193 something rolling in the back I'm a bowler, I bowl a lot and I didn't realize that my
194 bowling ball was just rolling around in the back of my car just banging stuff up uh
195 cause they just left everything laying out. Uhh my LB had medication in the car but
196 they didn't open it up but they opened up the bag and his medication was just laying
197 out in the car and um I just felt like a lot of it was unnecessary and um I mean even if
198 you thought I had a guns or drugs, just do your job, go through the regular questions
199 and what you are supposed to ask me. If you wanted to search my car, if you had
200 legal to search the car, you search the car and there was nothing in there, there was
201 no need for you to be in my face telling me how stupid my decision was, there was no
202 need for you to be telling me um that you know I'm supposed to be going home with a
203 felony and this, that and the other thing blah, blah, blah. I just feel like there was a
204 bunch of extraneous with it that was unnecessary and very much so with her in
205 particular it did make me feel targeted and out of the group of police officers that
206 were there, there were two African American males they didn't really talk to us too
207 much they were kinda just there doing what their job was um I mean I don't know
208 you know what they could have done or said to be a little bit different but um I mean
209 she was going in on me. And my phone rang one time, I mean my thing with the
210 police I try just not to make the situation worse just because I know with the color of
211 my skin anything I say or do is just gonna make it worse. So my phone rang and I
212 actually ask her if I could pick up my phone and she told me no. I said can I at least
213 tell somebody that Im supposed to be meeting that I've been pulled over and that I'm
214 going to be late because I've been pulled over and she said no I can't pick up my
215 phone. Um so honestly after that situation I've disliked Anytown police um and I put
216 it specifically on Anytown police because I've had experiences with Durham police
217 not necessarily even being pulled over for thing I did wrong I mean its been random
218 things I have been pulled over for but none of the times that I have been pulled over
219 have been anything like this situation or any of the situations I've had. The police

220 office one time I got pulled over because I didn't have the lights um I don't know why
221 I didn't but he didn't approach me like you know oh what are you doing, I was a
222 senior in high school and I come from prom and he just ask me you know how are
223 you doing tonight you all look nice are you coming from so and so hotel because
224 apparently a lot of people drink there under age and I said no we are not and he just
225 looked at us and you know I guess he figured we were not any trouble and he said
226 just so you know your lights are not on and you might want to turn them on. Have a
227 nice night and he let us go. This was a white male officer in Durham so that why I
228 put it specifically on Anytown police that I do not like dealing with so when I drive I
229 drive like a grandma. Um anytime and they sit in herds. I live right off campus and
230 they sit by CVS and Walgreens they got four cars sitting there right together just
231 chillin next to one another. You know they will hide out and things like that and I
232 can definitely tell they are on the prowl and um not only the fact that me being an
233 African American student but I think they jumped on me in that situation because I
234 was a college student. And um yeah after that moment I definitely felt targeted I
235 definitely have a defense against Anytown police and I had my cousin represent me in
236 court, he's a lawyer here in Anytown and because of that whole thing, I don't know if
237 the DA is African American, White or whatever but the DA wanted like a hundred
238 hours of community service in like a month and a half, because he (cousin) got my
239 court date extended, but in order for him to for my cousin to get it off whatever the
240 DA said I had to by the next court date. So he's talking a month and a half a 100
241 hours of community service. My cousin was able to argue him down to 50 hours I
242 mean that was a little more reasonable um still took a bit of work out of me but I
243 mean I do community service on a regular basis so 50 hours was a little more feasible
244 than I mean 100 hours in a month and a half so um but basically it is no longer on my
245 record thanks to my cousin but had I not had him as a resource I don't know what
246 my record would look like right now (laughs) um cause um he pretty much helped me
247 all three of those instances cause the three times I got pulled over in Anytown within
248 a span of about four months so yeah since then I avoid them as much as possible and
249 if they do bother me I try to be as polite and just go along with the situation because I
250 don't like Anytown police.

251 Knowing what you know now, would you still select the college that you are now
252 attending? If Yes, please explain. If No, please explain. I would definitely still choose
253 USA. Um I would choose USA just simply because I feel like just choosing between a
254 predominantly white institution or an HBCU I feel like USA has a very good mix and
255 maybe an unbalanced mix but compared to any other PWI or HBCU it has the most
256 mix of cultures and diversity on their campus so the diversity or even the things that
257 are relevant to my culture may not be obvious things that I have to see but if you look
258 for them they are there. That's not true to every PWI or vise versa if I went to an
259 HBCU you know if I was a white student at an HBCU not everything on that campus
260 is obviously prevalent to my culture so I think USA does well with having a very good
261 mix of cultures um you just have to know where to look for them and I feel like you
262 know choosing USA for that reason is very important to me because I come from a
263 very diverse background I don't come from just an African American background

264 but that is the dominant culture in my life but um experiencing and having multiple
 265 cultures, not necessarily the majority, but the minority cultures around me having
 266 those programs and events available that I can just attend you know walking across
 267 campus I think definitely will help me move forward after I graduate.
 268 What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
 269 Um being complacent, or uh that's not the word for that, like uh settling you know I
 270 feel like, I feel like I know that I could have done way better in some cases but I think
 271 at times I let being tired get to me or the fact that the program I'm in is very hard um
 272 I think I let those thing let me be ok with just getting a C or just passing the class um
 273 or just the fact that I am here at a PWI um maybe that made me feel like oh its ok
 274 just as long as I get the credit or as long as I get the degree in the end instead of really
 275 deciding naw I'm really trying to make the Dean's list or you know I'm really trying
 276 to get the Chancellor's list, I'm trying to graduate with honors, I think that I did let
 277 myself settle here and there.
 278 What could your college do to increase your chances of success? I don't know, I'm
 279 trying to think of something more specific. I would say that within the music building
 280 they could do a little more accepting, not accepting but ok I will just give you an
 281 example I took a marching band course and basically its supposed to be a very
 282 general marching band class and by the end of the marching band course you are
 283 supposed to have a very generalized idea of what marching band is like when you
 284 graduate. I come from a show style marching band high school and a lot of the
 285 students here when they graduate won't teach at a show style high school or
 286 marching band programs a lot of students that are here did not come from show style
 287 high schools and a lot of professors are not experienced with show style so something
 288 like that I feel like my marching band course was only geared towards coral or non-
 289 show style marching band style just because the professors were inexperienced or
 290 didn't know anything about it or didn't care about it. I was lucky enough that there
 291 were a lot of times that we were able to come up and teach and I was able to bring my
 292 experiences to the table and share them with my peers but what about the classes that
 293 don't have any students that have that experience and so even with the students that
 294 graduate and you know that may get a job offer from a high school that have a show
 295 style program they could have had that experience in college or you know been
 296 exposed to that so I think maybe the culture of some of the classes could be expanded
 297 a little bit more um so particularly in classes like that. My other classes outside of
 298 my marching band classes have done pretty well. With that my music education
 299 courses have actually they dive more into public education and not only public
 300 education but um title one school and low income schools and inner city school and
 301 rural area schools a lot of my music education courses were geared towards those
 302 schools, um which I think was good but I still think like my marching band courses
 303 and some of my other courses missed some of that so I think maybe that would have
 304 you know maybe even enticed more African Americans students to apply to the
 305 school of music at USA.

2 What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban)
3 **Uh it was a I guess a rural area 40% black, 40 % white well uh 35% black, 50%**
4 **white, 15% Hispanic it was a good mix in HS as a real up and coming area. People**
5 **would call it a white town but it had a good mix of people but it was pretty rural**
6 If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in
7 which you grew up? **27540**
8 How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you
9 change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher
10 education experience? **What was the first part of the question? I think they prepared**
11 **us pretty well uh I think they could have done a better job with papers. A lot of high**
12 **schools is just like testing just a bunch of testing. Depending on your major you may**
13 **not do a lot of testing. I was a history major and even though I tested it wasn't a lot**
14 **of essay questions it was multiple choice. In college it was a lot of essay questions and**
15 **sometimes we didn't have test we had papers. They (High School) slacked us in that**
16 **department. Writing and time management and how to use all of our resources when**
17 **it comes to school work.**
18 Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend? **Well I didn't**
19 **know what college I wanted to go to because I was in love with HS to death I was like**
20 **I know I gotta go to college and I was thinking about Wake Tech a little technical**
21 **community college because I wanted to be close to home. But I did want to go to**
22 **college at the same time. USA was the only school I wanted to go to and I knew I**
23 **wasn't going to get in to UNC. I also thought about A&T but once I got wait listed I**
24 **decided to wait on because I had family that went here and my hs coach went to**
25 **school here.**
26 What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college
27 experience/education? **Um hummmm I guess I would kinda say distractions for me**
28 **personally, I would say friends. I put the importance of hanging out or playing ball**
29 **or video games over my school work. It just seemed more entertaining, but it's not**
30 **getting the work done period. It's the importance of getting it done in a timely**
31 **manner you know so I'd pick playing ball over doing a paper when you know I**
32 **should be doing it so you know and then stay up all night getting it done. Just the**
33 **important factor of just making the responsible decision of a friendship and other**
34 **things like that over school work. I wouldn't say I regretted it because I loved my**
35 **college experience so but I would say that was a barrier as far as school work and**
36 **friendships.**
37 What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to college
38 education and your chances of success? **I have really been thinking about this lately,**
39 **like they say you have to have a degree and all these things to be successful and um**
40 **throughout college I really didn't think about it like that. My family has told me a**
41 **young black man you need to be successful and it will look good if you graduate and**
42 **you know a lot of black men don't do that. I realized that I have never really**

43 categorized myself in that category, I've always just, I've never really gotten too deep
44 into race I've always just kinda of, you know, I mean I know I'm black, but I've
45 always just kinda seen myself as a college student and so I knew the importance of
46 graduating but I never and just told myself I would never stress over school to the
47 point it was just going to drive me crazy cause I had an ex-girlfriend and she kinda
48 stressed herself out it and I just saw the weigh it had on her because she just wanted
49 to live up to the standards. She always would say no I'm going to have a good job
50 and nice house and things. I was always more, I mean I will get the work done and I
51 want to graduate and I want to graduate on time if possible but I'm not going to go to
52 great lengths to end up stressing myself out so as far as the media is concerned it had
53 a little bit of an effect on me but I'm starting just now to feel the effects of man I need
54 to like I need to be out in this work force and be teaching by august you know I'm
55 going to feel like a bum I'm going to feel like I don't uh fit the typical mold. Which I
56 know it isn't important in the grand scheme -based on my faith I know that's not
57 important to conform to this world's importance. But it has a little bit of effect as of
58 lately but throughout my early undergrad experience not at all cause I said I was
59 going to do this my way you know and get out in four year and lately it's starting to
60 take an effect on me.

61 Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your
62 professors and peers in class. Um early on in college uh I felt pretty valued I won't lie I
63 had a couple of history classes and like a couple of general education classes you
64 know where it was discussion based I remember really my freshmen year um this is
65 when I saw myself as the black kid in the class I was like you know I'm going to go
66 here and I need to be like the black voice and sound smart you know and so they
67 won't look at me as the typical black kid in class who just won't talk in class or don't
68 know and so I was just kinda of shocked that my opinion was really valued um you
69 know in those discussions and things and that's when I kinda removed the black tag
70 and said ok like you can just be a student um so yeah and then later on in college in
71 some of my classes I would feel kinda just like a number especially in classes I didn't
72 really care about I'd say like the large lecture classes I wouldn't dare speak up. In
73 those kinda classes I wouldn't find my opinion as valued so I didn't even speak up I
74 would sit either in the front or the back and I just wouldn't say a word cause I didn't
75 want to say anything wrong and a lot of the times the conversation would end up
76 talking about something in the news and I really don't watch the news too much, so I
77 wouldn't dare speak up. There was one class history 316 with WJ and that's where I
78 feel like everyone's opinion was valued the most. He really he's a great professor,
79 tough, very tough very blunt but uh if you did your work and did the research and
80 read like your opinion was valued because he took you as a student you know if you
81 read the course work and did those things then you know your opinion was valued as
82 a knowledgeable student so for the most part I felt like my opinions were valued by
83 my peers and by my professors except when you get to those large classrooms cause
84 that's when I wouldn't speak up because that when I didn't want to embarrass the
85 race.

86 Are there any academic support services available to you on campus? **They say they are**
87 **but I say that's my fault for never really using those effectively. Uh I know they have**
88 **like tutoring and things like that on campus but I guess I would say it's kinda sad well**
89 **it's not really sad but I never really I wouldn't say I didn't care that much to do it but**
90 **I just felt like one I could do it myself or I could find one of my friends that could help**
91 **me I didn't want to take it to the extent of tutoring and having to go to different**
92 **services like it took me forever to go to Career Services to get help with my resume.**
93 **Um I felt like it was a task and they don't take enough real personal interest in it you**
94 **know for me to really get something out of it. I just felt like was another number and**
95 **I didn't want to take it to that extent you know go out of my way to be another**
96 **number I like someone who would personally invest in my and that's why I would**
97 **just leave it to myself or a friend. I went to the writing center one time but that's**
98 **because I had to for a class. I felt like it's not personal enough, it's kinda just like you**
99 **go into the writing center, they look at your paper a little bit ask you a few generic**
100 **questions and then maybe give you a little bit of personable service and then say good**
101 **luck so I just didn't I felt as if it wasn't enough personal connection and would be just**
102 **a waste of time.**

103 How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab,
104 advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university?

105 Have you taken advantages of these support services? If no, why? If yes, what services did
106 you use and why? Itemized list of services.

107 Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on
108 campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure? **No, no I**
109 **never has one and I never attempted to have one. Like one of my professors was**
110 **pretty cool my sophomore year in terms of like I did my work so you know he**
111 **respected me and we could have decent conversations I never had like a personal**
112 **connection. My Spanish teacher uh professor my freshman year and I ended up just**
113 **quitting on that which I kinda regret but there was never like a mentor mentee thing**
114 **for me.**

115 Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college
116 student? **I don't know because I never really yearned for that. Um like an older**
117 **person yeah as of lately. Because sometimes I get uncomfortable like almost yeah like**
118 **uncomfortable when it comes to like older people I'm just now starting to embrace**
119 **that but as far as like just one older person I don't know I've never really yearned for**
120 **that. If it was in a big group setting you know like I'm in a small group kinda like a**
121 **bible study at my church we meet every Wednesday morning at 6am and I like that**
122 **because I can get really personal with those guys. But its not just one person and it's a**
123 **lot of opinions and its more comfortable for me than if I had one person who was**
124 **kinda like just I would rather have multiple people. I would say the only person I**
125 **have had that with is the guy who lead me to Christ, he kinda disciple me his name**
126 **was Brandon Tuck but even then it wasn't just me, it was me and my friend that he**
127 **was pouring into so it was more comfortable than like that one personal relationship**
128 **with one person I have always thought that would be uncomfortable kinda weird....**
129 **in a sense.**

130 Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What programs,
131 concerts, recitals, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly participate
132 in? **I was a basketball manager for about a year and a half uh kinda got fired because**
133 **I messed up the film uh but that was basketball has always kinda been my love. That**
134 **was always something that I was geared towards if it was outside the classroom. Um**
135 **I've never really been a community service guy or anything like that ever and I think**
136 **it comes from laziness cause it wouldn't even cross my mind until I heard someone**
137 **else say that they do it. So it's like my experience would come from managing**
138 **because I wanted to be a walk on at one point but that went out the window. I still**
139 **kinda enjoyed being a manager, I learned a lot about life and about basketball from**
140 **that. Outside of that I have never really been an extra-curricular activity kinda of**
141 **person, I mean like wow I will play sports and stuff but as far as clubs and**
142 **organizations other than managing nothing really.**

143 Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you
144 would be interested in participating? Please explain. **They do provide well see that's the**
145 **thing I feel like with these like the NEO Black Society and stuff like I don't know uh**
146 **that just the first one that comes to mind and I've seen this new program**
147 **organization called GEM something and I think its more for like black culture. It all**
148 **just seems so kinda fake to me like it's just kinda something else to write down on**
149 **your resume you know and I'm sure that these programs do great stuff, you know**
150 **but it's like it seems like it is so surface level and if it's surface level, I don't want to**
151 **do anything that is just surface level because I feel like it's a waste of time. Like I was**
152 **saying earlier about the uh program on campus and stuff it just all seems so surface**
153 **level. That's why I did managing because I knew managing would not be surface**
154 **level it would be like I'm going to be in practice every day, I'm going to be filming,**
155 **going to games you know something like I'm going to be going deeper into it where I**
156 **could develop relationships like I'm still good friends with a lot of the old basketball**
157 **players and that stuff means a lot to me you know cause even though these guys you**
158 **know are not superstar athletes but you know they are athletes at the highest level of**
159 **basketball, but we have personal connections. Matter of fact JP he told me that part**
160 **of the reason he committed here was because of me, because I rebounded from him**
161 **during his official visit and we ended up have good conversations and you know now**
162 **we've been friends for almost three years. Unless you're like deep into the program I**
163 **just feel like unless you are the head of one of these programs it doesn't get too**
164 **personal, I just feel like a lot of it is surface level.**

165 Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true
166 reflection of you as a person? Please explain. **No Response**

167 Knowing what you know now, would you still select the college that you are now
168 attending? If Yes, please explain. If No, please explain. **. I would definitely choose USA**
169 **again. It's big enough to move around a little bit but just small enough to where I can**
170 **pretty much know everyone well not the commuters but everyone on campus. It's a**
171 **good area for college kids, um I found Jesus here and then found a church home. It's**
172 **a good university, I couldn't do a Carolina if I went back it's not personal enough. It**
173 **goes back to the personal thing and I feel like I would be kind of a number at**

174 Carolina and maybe not at other colleges like UNC Wilmington I don't know what
175 the enrollment population looks like but I'd choose USA again because it just like it's
176 small enough to where I can have personal relationships with people. I've met some
177 of my best friends here. You know it's been a good time I've learned a lot. I know
178 I've learned way more about life than I have about education which that's what
179 college is about anyway, it's about the experience more than its about the education
180 honestly. Um I feel like that's what you pay the most for when it comes to dorm life
181 and eating you know all of that it has nothing to do with school that all has to do with
182 developing your character and developing you as a person so yeah I would choose
183 USA again.

184 What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
185 Uh I wouldn't be so lazy like I'm pretty I not a lazy person but when it comes to
186 school and some things in life when it comes to making quote unquote adult moves
187 I'm so comfortable in this like young state and I know the real world is coming right
188 around the corner. I'm just so comfortable in this state it's like that I look at it as
189 laziness/ a little bit of fear of not going out and just like doing stuff you know doing
190 stuff to enhance my future so I would definitely change that. Also, I might change my
191 major I don't know if that's more about myself but if I could do it over I might
192 change my major to math. Because I have discovered lately that and I've always
193 thought this but I never wanted to say anything because I'm like I'm here and I'm a
194 history major and history is cool but I don't love it by any means and I really learned
195 that not to sound corny or cliché but like you should really do what you love you
196 know and I've always loved math like I can do mental math in my head all day and if
197 you have ever seen me looking off I'm probably doing a math problem and I would
198 definitely change my major to math because uh I would love to be a math teacher
199 that's something I would love doing. History it's like it's ok it can be enjoyable at
200 times but all I could tell you all I can tell you is like surface level stuff about history
201 like there's so much stuff I don't know like the Civil War well I take that back the
202 Civil War is what I love but outside of that like the Revolutionary War, the Civil
203 Rights Movement, the World War I don't know a thing about those things and I'm
204 walking up out of here with a degree in history. It's like that really shocks me
205 sometimes how I could like weave in and out of the cracks of college and graduate in
206 four years with a history degree and I don't know too much more honestly about
207 history than I did when I walked through doors in 2009. So when it comes to my
208 purest educational experience, I'd change that about myself, I would do something
209 that I loved because I think that maybe if I did math then maybe I would have sought
210 out internships or sought out math programs you know because it would be
211 something that I wanted to do. But it was like with history I would have a paper I
212 would read what I needed to know about it to do the paper then I was done I'm not
213 thinking about it until the next assignment comes up you know so I would probably
214 change my major but it's clearly too late for that now.

215 What could your college do to increase your chances of success? I feel like they could
216 have made it they should make class more to where you have to learn more I don't
217 know it just feel like and maybe not for all majors I'm sure a Biology major could do

218 like I do and just weave in and out because I feel like that stuff you have to know but
219 I feel like they could make it more to where you have to learn more. I feel like college
220 is so and it goes along with the whole school system. It's more about like I'll go back
221 to that word surface level learning, it's like painting something onto a wall and it's
222 like that's how you teach it it's just one layer of paint and we learn that layer of paint
223 and then that layer of paint peels off and we just paint on another thin layer and then
224 it all peels off. It's like there is no deeper learning there's not thought provoking
225 questions you know that's why the history 316 class even though it was tough I got a
226 C in there but I learned the most in that class because he ask us questions and he did
227 things that made us think and made us learn on deeper levels more than just here let
228 me read this article about something that happened in one of the countries in South
229 America you know and then to never discuss it again. I would rather be taught three
230 concepts in a class for 15 weeks and learn it deeply and learn it thoroughly than learn
231 15 concepts in 15 weeks and forget week one by week three and then you know and
232 it's like the university could stress more of that to the professors you know layers of
233 learning, I would rather learn deeper layers than just a bunch of stuff across the
234 board because all of that stuff peels off I could not tell you anything I learned my
235 freshman year, anything. No critical thought please unless it was a professor that
236 cares more about the students learning the material than they do about how much
237 they as a professor knows. I mean these professors are knowledgeable of course they
238 have doctorates so you know of course they are knowledgeable a lot of them they
239 don't really care about how much the students actually learn. They want you to
240 know they know and then it's almost like it's like they know what they know and it's
241 like a box and so they want to keep you all they want you to learn is what they know
242 and so it will always be a box it will never be an expansion of learning. But whereas
243 teachers who ask thought provoking questions you know it's almost like a arrogance
244 it's like they don't have an arrogance about themselves as to where you know it's like
245 the student would never know more than me they want you to think about and
246 expand and learn as much as you can possibly learn as a student and until we can run
247 across more professors like that we will just have a bunch of boxy people walking
248 about here and that's what we have a lot of boxy classes you know even with that's
249 why I have always said if I was ever a history teacher I would give way more papers
250 and essay style test than multiple choice because multiple choice you learn it for the
251 time and then there nothing else you know it's either right or wrong and that's not
252 what life is life isn't right or wrong life is I guess there's more gray area in life than
253 there is black and white so when you put kids and students into assessment kind of
254 A,B,C, multiple choice kind of world and then there will never be any deeper thought.
255 I like essay style people, tell me all you learn, tell me why you learned it and tell me
256 why you think that and tell my why you think that could happen after that. Don't
257 just tell me it's this because you never know why and you never know when and
258 that's boxy to me a lot of boxes.

What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban)

Urban

If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in which you grew up? **28052**

How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher education experience? **Um my high school basically prepared us for college I went to a magnet school and I basically would not change anything else about it**

Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend? **When I was in the 9th grade one of my family members came here and I have just been researching and uh I knew it was a very diverse university. I looked at a few HBCU prior to selecting and attending this school.**

What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college experience/education? **I don't think I have any.**

What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to college education and your chances of success? **The media of course talks about how African American males are not successful and they do a lot of downplay on African American males, but I take that as a push to better myself and to live out what the media says.**

Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your professors and peers in class. **Different professors have different beliefs some professors do not um heed to African American males I've seen it done before and some are more towards African American males um just depends on the professor. As far as helping wise they are not helpful. Um generally they are helpful, but you do have some who are just like the professors, they don't like black people.**

Are there any academic support services available to you on campus? **Yes, SSP, Tutoring, and that it that's all I can think of.**

How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab, advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university? **Through emails, and syllabi in some of the classrooms.**

Have you taken advantages of these support services? If no, why? If yes, what services did you use and why? Itemized list of services. **I have used tutoring uh yeah just tutoring**

Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure? **I have!**

Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college student? **Staff member. Yes, because when I am struggling in certain things these individuals that I talk to are very encouraging and helpful and of course they are of the same color as well they've had some of the same struggles so they do help.**

Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What programs, concerts, recitals, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly participate in? **Resident Advisor so I'm doing a lot on campus as far as the halls are concerned.**

43 **Um some basketball games, baseball games and the rec center but not much more**
44 **after that.**

45 Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you
46 would be interested in participating? Please explain. **NEO Black Society and the**
47 **NAACP I mean those are some of the things that I would be interested in but I just**
48 **don't go. The university provides nothing that I've seen.**

49 Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true
50 reflection of you as a person? Please explain. **Yes, I was walking with a white girl to**
51 **her car and there was a white lady and well we were laughing and the white lady**
52 **looks at my white friend and she says are you ok? My white friend says yes I'm fine**
53 **and she says I just wanted to make sure and the white lady looks at me rolls her eyes**
54 **at me and keeps walking. She was a faculty member. The police alerts consist of a lot**
55 **of black people in them. Um generally all of them are black individuals and I know**
56 **it's not only black people it has to be some white people doing some things too.**

57 Knowing what you know now, would you still select the college that you are now
58 attending? If Yes, please explain. If No, please explain. **Yes the reason I would is**
59 **because of the Business School. Um they have great professors who are very**
60 **educated and who are very helpful in some sense.**

61 What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
62 **Open minded, when I came in I was very closed minded and um opened minded to**
63 **know that everybody is not like me and that everybody else has different beliefs and**
64 **values. Religion beliefs they have different religion beliefs and um everyone wasn't**
65 **raised like me, not saying I was raised perfectly, but they are some things that I think**
66 **should be different that other people don't see that should be different. So I would**
67 **say that and then I think that everyone should be equal and I don't that everybody is**
68 **always equal. Black people are still at the bottom. Same treatment, we mentioned**
69 **programs earlier and most programs here are well mostly geared towards white**
70 **people. It includes all of my experiences. I know that I go to a PWI and it's not a**
71 **HBCU but there should be some changes, even in tutoring there should be some**
72 **changes I don't see many black tutors, there should be more black tutors. Mine was**
73 **one of the dumbest tutors I've ever had.**

74 What could your college do to increase your chances of success? **I think that you learn**
75 **better from people that look like you who have been through some of the same**
76 **struggles that you've been through so I think getting more individuals who have umm**
77 **more African American faculty especially in the Bryan School. I haven't even had**
78 **one in the Bryan School, I've only seen one. I have never had a black professor not**
79 **even in my African American classes.**

What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban)

Urban

If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in which you grew up? **27613**

How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher education experience? **Um my high school experience didn't prepare me as well.**

What I would have changed about it was my meetings with my advisors instead of just signing a paper where it told me the classes I would have to take for the next year, I wish I would have ask her why and why is it set up like this and type of questions like that. More social, I wasn't aware of networking uh how to communicate effectively if I had a problem. Because basically in high school if I had a problem my advisor received an email and she reached out to my homeroom teacher and said look Michael needs to come here and she basically told me flat out but I didn't know how to communicate that effectively if I had a social problem

Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend? **Hummmm I selected UNCG because one it had my major and two I already had friends from high school so I got a little insight more about UNCG and why they like it. Why I selected them was primarily because it was one of the two acceptance letters I received and the other I didn't want to attend.**

What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college experience/education? **Uh biggest barrier I see for myself is my relationship with my advisor. Basically in regards for my grades and in regards to the requirements set up like the requirement markers didn't have too much knowledge about those**

What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to college education and your chances of success? **Media plays a huge role one because we are constantly looking at media whether its televised, social networking whether its through advertisement posters etcetera. It plays a big part through success wise mainly because of the sub-titles, the titles uh in regards to success in the African American community so it kinda puts a big toll on us to succeed and to overcome those barriers that society has limited our communities to do.**

Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your professors and peers in class. **Ok well to start off in my small room classes, um I'm highly valued in my small room classes by my classmates and my professors. Because I actively engage myself in conversation daily and I make myself known in the classroom. As far as my big lecture classes I am kinda not known by my professor or my classmates unless I have a friend or two in there. Only because one the environment and two there are not that many black students in there that I can connect with so it makes it kinda hard as far as to relate and then with my professor. My professor already struggles with trying to know names and stuff so I also put down myself because I don't go to see him as much as I should but in regards to my**

43 classmates it makes it hard to relate being few black people in there. I'm currently
 44 doing a group project in my media production class so what we are doing is we have
 45 to go out and shoot a documentary um in my group I am the only African American
 46 male in there with three other Caucasian males but uh it's a small classroom so like I
 47 said I am highly active with that class a lot of my classmates respect me and I don't
 48 feel too much tension in that environment but that's why only current group project.
 49 Are there any academic support services available to you on campus? Yes they are but
 50 none that I am aware of but I know they are out there. Let me rephrase that, I do
 51 know about them but as far as me taking the initiative to go to them I don't go to
 52 them as often as I should. I take advantage of them only in regards to assignments in
 53 a prior class I know that I need to get help on other than that outside of class or I
 54 guess I'm saying taking upon the initiative in my media class if we are writing a
 55 paper I don't go to a writing center for that paper but if I was writing that paper in
 56 English I would go to the writing center for that paper so like what I'm saying I don't
 57 take initiative to continue to use that service outside of the recommended classes.
 58 How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab,
 59 advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university? Yes
 60 Have you taken advantages of these support services? If no, why? If yes, what services did
 61 you use and why? Itemized list of services. Yes highly important. I think that because
 62 1) it is a direct line of communication for someone that actually works for the
 63 institution I am trying to be successful at. 2) I also feel like I need to establish that
 64 relationship on a personal level for them to understand me and for them to help me
 65 seek way for me to be successful and grow in the ways that I need too.
 66 Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on
 67 campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure?
 68 Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college
 69 student?
 70 Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What programs,
 71 concerts, recitals, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly participate
 72 in? I regularly participate in men's club basketball sporting events and my
 73 experience there is fun entertaining uh well respected by other because of my skill set
 74 and my position with that organization other events I attended were through NBS
 75 and GYM and my experience with those have been a great one because I enjoy doing
 76 something outside of the classroom with my fellow brothers in the African American
 77 community so being able to come together as one and enjoying something on campus
 78 was a great experience.
 79 Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you
 80 would be interested in participating? Please explain. Yes they do uh as far as I know of
 81 only through the Multicultural Affairs in conjunction with AFS programs. I have
 82 only attended one event that they actually held and I found it to be very informative
 83 but as far as it being known I haven't really known about any other events it's like
 84 they don't really push promotions for that I feel like and I feel like I only knew about
 85 the first event because I was in the African American studies class so I feel like
 86 outside of that they don't really promote for it so a lot of people don't know about it.

87 Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true
88 reflection of you as a person? Please explain. **For myself personally I haven't seen any**
89 **for myself being put in a situation. For others though, I have been in countless**
90 **conversations where outside of our race in the Cafeteria of course where it's Fried**
91 **Chicken Wednesday considering the environment where we are all supposed to be**
92 **friends. I think it was three of the white friends felt like since we are all friends they**
93 **could step outside the box and for me personally the typical stereotype all black**
94 **people love chicken type thing. I kinda felt some kind of way about it but my friends**
95 **were kinda laughing along with it like of course we love chicken, I love chicken you**
96 **know I was raised on chicken but um for myself I felt kind of a mock kind of a you**
97 **know regular stereotype that we shouldn't be egging on I guess and I guess my**
98 **friends didn't see it that way but that's the only type of incident that I have been in.**
99 Knowing what you know now, would you still select the college that you are now
100 attending? If Yes, please explain. If No, please explain. **Yes I would primarily because**
101 **what I have gotten myself into here as far as organization, as far as my hierarchy in**
102 **classes and as far as the network and connections I have made here and also because**
103 **of the diversity here um only reason I say that I feel like I get a lot more diverse**
104 **experiences here than rather than attending A&T like my mother wanted me to go.**
105 What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
106 **Um I would change my judgment only because uh everyone is quick to judge and I**
107 **also feel like I am quick to judge when it comes to understanding someone else's**
108 **background and culture. The only thing I wish I could change is being more open or**
109 **more open minded to learning about more cultures and learning where people come**
110 **from other than being concerned about myself and the problems that I face.**
111 What could your college do to increase your chances of success? **One thing that my**
112 **university could do to increase my success is the knowledge of my academic progress**
113 **in regards to the requirement markers um and that all starts with the Advisors. I**
114 **think they should force the Advisors to reach out to each student that they have in**
115 **order in regards to making a relationship with them getting to know who they are**
116 **and where they are trying to go in life and that type of aspect. I wish they would push**
117 **more to giving the students more knowledge of how to select the right classes how to**
118 **make sure you are covering these markers and excetera.**

Interview Questions Robert

What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban)

Rural

If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in which you grew up? **27520**

How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher education experience? **I think my high school did a fairly well job of preparing me for college. Um they were big on academics as far as all of my teachers they always stressed the importance of being on time and just speaking up in class and working on presentations. Cause at the end of the day with you get towards graduation you have um to think about college or if you are going to higher education when you get there you will have to do presentations and give speeches and have meeting. So you know they did a lot of activities and workshops in school and after school to help prepare the juniors and seniors to engage with that.**

Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend? **I had two choices, no I didn't, I had multiple choices, but I had two top choices, my first one was ECU um sorry the second one was ECU and the first one was USA. Um and I liked both of the campuses the people there were friendly um but it seemed like everybody there was from where I was from ended up going to ECU. I have nothing against those people but I felt like I wanted to be somewhere I could start a new chapter in my life where maybe I just see a few people from back home and you know meet some more new folks and whatnot to make connections and network and just build myself socially and then the diversity that USA has was something that I was always used and something that I take pride in from where I'm at because we have a lot of diversity back home so that is why I chose USA. I did a university sponsored campus visit during my senior year in high school.**

What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college experience/education? **Let me see. I think some of the barriers could be a lack of resources. I don't think that there is a major lack of resources as far as what's on the campus and being provided for minorities. I actually worked in the office of multicultural affairs and the programs that they do and you know the sessions that they have are pretty beneficial. And actually working in an international dorm uhm they did a lot with that too so I don't think there is a lack of resources but I know that could be more for minorities' especially African American males. I think just uh another barrier for me personally could be, it would be more of a mental think going into you know the stereotype that people have of African American men not saying that I am a part of that stereotype of you know how society looks at us uh we have to fight and work a little bit harder almost ten times harder just to get you know what the next man has or what the next woman has or just to earn what we should get so.**

What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to college education and your chances of success? **Umm when it comes to African American males and especially from those back home um as far as media when we do hear**

45 about statistics within African American community it seems to be or from my 19
 46 years of living seems to be something negative about how we have to do this
 47 differently so we can better ourselves or do this differently so we can go higher go
 48 further but its not all like that there are some good statistics I feel that um some of
 49 the media is not portraying that and the statistics that they are portraying I don't
 50 think are all that accurate I don't know the media is flip floppy, wishy washy type.
 51 Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your
 52 professors and peers in class. For the most part the professors that I have had since
 53 coming in as a freshmen um they seem to care about their job and about their
 54 students and I was a little worried about that coming from the place that I am from
 55 where some teachers in High school are just there to do their job they didn't really
 56 care about the wellbeing of the students academically but it was a little different here.
 57 The male professors and the female professors the ones that I have had I have met
 58 with some during office hours you know um about a test that I probably didn't do so
 59 well on that I should have and they look at me and is like there is something about
 60 you I know you're better than this I know your mom wouldn't like this grade, or you
 61 know something like that it shows that they care um like I said it's kind of surprising
 62 being an African American male at a PWI and having one of my white professors
 63 talking to me like that like she knows I can be better and like she believes in me and
 64 that's the only type of relationship we have is just student professor. For the most
 65 part for me personally my professors have been very beneficial um to my academic
 66 studies and my being here as a student. Classmates um that's a little different um
 67 because well my classmates in the past I know we haven't interacted as much unless
 68 we had a group type of thing or unless we had a project outside of class and even with
 69 those um that wasn't too bad you know I mean we all would talk and schedule up a
 70 time or meeting when we could get together and work. For the most part all of those
 71 have been well too I can't say I have had one bad experience in regards to how they
 72 treat me according to my sex or my race so for those two it's been pretty good.
 73 Are there any academic support services available to you on campus? Yes there are they
 74 have the student learning center and tutoring services um what else is there they have
 75 the writing center and speaking center um of course office hours with my professors
 76 and I say that because every time that I went to speak with one of my professors its
 77 usually about a test or an upcoming test um and they offer a lot of ways to study and
 78 maybe some ways that I haven't done before that could help me as far as getting
 79 ready for the test and all of them have turned out to be beneficial.
 80 How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab,
 81 advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university?
 82 Have you taken advantages of these support services? If no, why? If yes, what services did
 83 you use and why? Itemized list of services. I have and they have helped a lot. I
 84 learned about them through the programs I had in my dorm my freshman year they
 85 would have programs and have people come and speak from those centers and in
 86 some of my classes representatives from different resources on campus like the
 87 speaking center would come and tell who they are, what they do, and what they are
 88 about and you know we tried it out me and my friends and we all had the same

89 results about how they really helped out and gave us some advice and you know
90 maybe make a change here or make add this there and it just worked out well for us.
91 Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on
92 campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure? Let's see
93 yes I have, I have two actually, one she is a CRL in Housing and Residence life AD
94 and the other is PC um and he's kinda been there um kinda guiding me and you
95 know just being on my level and I won't say being on top of me making sure I'm
96 doing my work but just you know his presence has made it seem I can go to him for
97 just questions whether is just because he is another African American male um a
98 professional at that on this campus so it made me feel I could come to him with
99 questions and be comfortable on a man to man basis you know just another African
100 American male to another African American male. And then AD, she's like another
101 you know another big sister. She's really looking out for me too um and I consider
102 them two to be the mentors on campus for me um just because of their words of
103 encouragement and you know their stories of when they were in school and helping
104 me out telling me about my future and planning and how we are looked on as African
105 American males and African American people um that's played a big part in how I
106 view myself on this campus and what I want to do in life as far as being successful.
107 Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college
108 student?

109 Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What programs,
110 concerts, recitals, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly participate
111 in? Uhhh the social part of being off of campus I guess you could say organizations
112 they are important to me. They played a big role in me here as a student and just
113 living in Greensboro because I am not from here um I always like to be a part of
114 something and I am a part of three organizations on campus they have all seem to be
115 places where I can fit and grow at the same time and better myself and most
116 importantly give back to community and better others so I feel that being off campus
117 with those organizations and doing the work that we do um it just builds on me as a
118 student and as a person um just being better so they are very important, very
119 important.

120 Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you
121 would be interested in participating? Please explain. To be honest I've been to, not
122 saying that they don't have more, but I've been to about two. Um I think it was one a
123 man came and freshmen year I was part of a Learning Community called Rites of
124 Passage um it was based on first year minority males or transfer minority males
125 students and bettering themselves and growing and getting used to college it just you
126 know laying the foundation to be successful. Um they let me see a man came and
127 spoke about us African American males, how society looks at us you know what they
128 expect us to be but how we should you know not live up to expectations of negativity
129 of being in jail or being on the streets cause um you know we can do just about
130 anything um that another race is doing you know as far as you know being successful.
131 I went to another one ahh what was it. I thing that is was a seminar type thing is was
132 about African Americans coming together um this wasn't just based on males but you

133 know African American males just coming together you know the black on black
134 crime the living up to the stereotypes like really changing ourselves um to be
135 successful and to change the stereotypes that other people have of us. I'm pretty sure
136 they have had others but since USA is so diverse I have heard of them having other
137 programs that are geared towards Hispanics or Asians um you know just different
138 cultures which are good too, but I really have not been a part of or heard of too many
139 that are geared towards African American males. I feel like they could do more
140 especially with us having a multicultural center in the EUC um I feel like they could
141 do a lot more as far as programs and events that are geared towards us and just
142 shedding light on um what needs to be done to better ourselves or you know not just
143 bettering ourselves but congratulating those who are doing something you know what
144 I mean because it is not just about the negativity like I said before there are people
145 out here, African American males who are doing better for themselves and others.
146 Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true
147 reflection of you as a person? Please explain. Let me see. Since I have been here I have
148 not been apart or been fully engaged in one of those stereotypical incidents but let me
149 see. This may not be as big but I had a friend over actually I had a bunch of friends
150 over and the girl that was over there see we are all cool with each other she's white
151 and we were trying to find something on tv and she turned straight to BET and she
152 said here you go it's you all's channel and I was like what makes you think we didn't
153 want to watch ESPN or Lifetime or you know something of that nature and she took
154 it as a joke she was like I was just joking, I was just joking but I didn't find it funny I
155 didn't find it as a joke, she could have been kicked out um but that happened actually
156 recently so that probably the uhhh the one that comes to mind as far as like the
157 biggest one. This has happened all my life, I've had incidents where I would be
158 walking on the sidewalk you know book bag or you know going to my grandmother's
159 house or coming from the corner store getting her some milk or something and I see a
160 white lady kinda like stop and just like kinda go the other way and then come back in
161 the same direction she was walking because she didn't want to pass me. Um that's
162 happened to me here uh freshmen year it happened to me and I just laugh at it, I just
163 laugh at it and shake my head uh but that's happened to me all my life she may walk
164 by and think maybe I'm going to rob them or you know maybe they think I'm
165 homeless and I'm going to beg them for money I don't know but it's pretty sad, it's
166 pretty sad like I don't think they look at me and see he's a college guy that goes here
167 you know he's probably going to class or he's probably helping out his mom or his
168 dad, oh it's a black man on the sidewalk let me go the other way for my safety you
169 know what I mean. This happened on campus it actually happened last semester
170 when I was an RA in Hawk Phillips I was leaving my dorm to go to class that
171 morning uh on the side walk I saw a white lady coming you know I moved over to
172 give her some room because the side walk isn't that big and then she walked across
173 the street and around a car and then like she was going somewhere else and I just
174 kinda looked back just to see if I was right and she came right back over and kept it
175 moving kept right on going so I said let me go to class, I've got other things to focus
176 on.

177 Knowing what you know now, would you still select the college that you are now
 178 attending? If Yes, please explain. If No, please explain. **I would. Because the incidents**
 179 **that have happened um I'm not going to say they didn't get to me at that moment**
 180 **they did but that's not what I'm here for. The world is full of chaos, racism, or**
 181 **stereotypes that you know are not necessarily all that true. I have greater**
 182 **expectations for myself I have certain things to live up to that will make me better**
 183 **and most of all to benefit somebody else so I really can't focus on a white lady or**
 184 **someone else that is not of my race walking on the other sidewalk to get away from**
 185 **me or you know saying something behind my back or turning to BET because she**
 186 **thinks it's a joke like that's not what I'm here for. One of these days I will probably**
 187 **be the person that they call on for help and that's just how I see it. It gets to be at**
 188 **times but I would still choose USA because of the diversity and because of all the**
 189 **great things I have experienced academically, personally, socially um so yeah.**
 190 What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
 191 **To be more successful in college. Personally I would change, actually I am working**
 192 **on this now, I would change um it's one thing that I live by now, I'm starting to try to**
 193 **live by is to be proactive instead of reactive um that's one thing I've learned**
 194 **especially in high school and freshmen year with like due dates or you know planning**
 195 **um because things always pop up you know what I mean. It's not really**
 196 **procrastination it's just go ahead and getting it out of the way because you know you**
 197 **have a million other things when you have grades, a job and you are part of three**
 198 **other organizations and you hold positions in some of those like a lot of things come**
 199 **up you're a busy person and everybody knows you, they know your face. Um being**
 200 **proactive and going ahead having that initiative to just go ahead and knock out a lot**
 201 **of that work so that when the time comes and that other stuff comes up um you are**
 202 **just moving right along. Um I think that would be something I could work on and**
 203 **necessarily change about myself um it's a work in progress I will say but doing it out**
 204 **of habit I'm trying to get into it more by being proactive um that I know for a fact**
 205 **will make me more successful. That's all I have to say about that.**
 206 What could your college do to increase your chances of success? **I know certain courses**
 207 **here, there are service learning courses and I really enjoy those um because we get to**
 208 **take this class and go out in the real world because it's usually towards our major**
 209 **what we want to do its somewhere around our areas. So that's good. I wish we could**
 210 **do that for I wouldn't say every class, but for me personally I like poetry I like you**
 211 **know concerts, spoken word I like that type of stuff and I'm in the poetry class like**
 212 **maybe it they could have people to come in and perform for us or maybe if we could**
 213 **have class in some type of poetry setting we go out there it's not a big thing we just**
 214 **observe and see how things go. Maybe just more hands on stuff um as far as straight**
 215 **notes, text book, power point, test coming up more in the world type stuff with**
 216 **whatever course we are taking and not just those courses that, who are just service**
 217 **learning courses um I think not every course but if more courses could be geared**
 218 **toward service learning. Um then I think that would help out for me personally.**

What was your High school experience in regards to community setting? (rural or urban)

Urban

If you can recall, what was the Zip Code (Region of birth or residence) of the area in which you grew up? **28403**

How well did your high school experience prepare you for college and what would you change about that experience which would have better prepared you for a successful higher education experience? **I went to an early college that was all about college readiness so the focus was primarily academics. If I can change anything I would have probably stuck to the traditional high school. Because we were prepared for college academically but the social aspect of college remained unknown to us.**

Why and how did you select your undergraduate university to attend? **I only applied to four schools. Basically I had USA as a safety net school. My other schools I got deferred to second semester which was State and ECU and Charlotte. But I had plans to transfer, but I fell in love with USA and decided to stay here.**

What are the barriers that prevent you from successfully and fully engaging in your college experience/education? **The biggest barrier was trying to navigate my major by myself. Because me being a political science major our community isn't as close so I didn't know any Political Science majors above me that were above me so I didn't have that type of guidance.**

What role do media messages play in how you perceive yourself related to college education and your chances of success? **What I get from, what I see in the media is that it's going be. The media really portrays college as something that is going to be easy and it doesn't really display the different challenges that I personally will have to face. So going into the college community or the university track I hit a lot of obstacles that I wasn't aware of as far as picking classes. What I see on tv is going to classes do your work and you will graduate. But there is a lot of struggles as far as picking the right classes, having the right teachers to teach those classes and as far as maintaining that level of academic success to remain in enrolled in college.**

Please describe your perceptions of the classroom as they relate to being valued by your professors and peers in class. **Well I have been here for three years and I have been the only African American male in all of my major courses so I don't really see there is any type of appreciation I guess. I don't even think that it's noticed at all. They know that I am there because I make myself known as far as my participation and I am actively engaged in all of my classes. But I don't think I am appreciated as much by my professors. Honestly, my goal in all of my classes is to try to make a friend when it comes to studying but I've noticed here at USA it's hard to do because people like to keep to themselves. Generally, I get a lot of people who want to work with me because I proved myself knowledgeable so I don't think it's uhh more of they want to work with me because I am going to get the good grade vs I don't want to work with you because I am a black male.**

Are there any academic support services available to you on campus? **Yes**

43 How were you made aware of the support services (tutoring, writing and speaking lab,
44 advising, study skills, etc.) available to you at the university? **Honestly the way I was**
45 **made aware to all of those was through my academic success course once it was**
46 **required for me to use those. I had no knowledge of these services prior to the**
47 **academic success course.**

48 Have you taken advantages of these support services? If no, why? If yes, what services did
49 you use and why? Itemized list of services. **Yes. The writing center, Spanish tutoring**
50 **and student services as far as understanding how to improve my GPA.**

51 Have you developed a mentor/mentee relationship with a professor or staff member on
52 campus who is willing to assist you with navigating the institutional structure? **I'm in my**
53 **junior year so this is the first year that I have had a mentor. I didn't have a mentor**
54 **my freshmen or sophomore years. I have not had any African American professors**
55 **in any of my classes.**

56 Is this type of relationship (mentor/mentee) important to you and your success as a college
57 student? **Yes. It is very important. It's important because it gives me the proper**
58 **guidance and it kinda is like having that mentor relationship it helps me kinda avoid**
59 **the different unforeseen obstacles and somewhere I can go for advice.**

60 Please describe your experiences on campus outside the classroom. What programs,
61 concerts, recitals, sporting events, or extra-curricular activities do you regularly participate
62 in? **Umm my overall experience outside the classroom hasn't been a bad one because**
63 **I make the personal choice to kinda keep to myself. To only go places that are needed**
64 **so the cafeteria, class then back to my room or the library if needed. As far as**
65 **hearing these police alerts as far as like the robberies and stuff that go around in the**
66 **nearby neighborhoods we laugh and joke about it with my friends, but it comes a**
67 **point when you realize that it becomes a huge stereotype and it's a constant**
68 **stereotype and it shows the potential of putting certain individuals at risk especially**
69 **the ones you see walking from the library late at night when the incident is going on.**
70 **Because usually in the text messages you see African American male, tall with a**
71 **hoodie. Late at night in Anytown that is every African American student coming**
72 **from the library because it's cold at night. So we run the risk of putting ourselves in**
73 **a dangerous situation just trying to get home.**

74 Does the university provide activities that are culturally relevant for you and that you
75 would be interested in participating? Please explain. **No but I've took the opportunity**
76 **to join an organization to push those events for myself and other similar people.**

77 Have you experienced incidents on campus that you considered stereotypical and not a true
78 reflection of you as a person? Please explain. **Yes and that's coming from an incident**
79 **freshmen year. I actually had a roommate who was into marijuana. He was a**
80 **smoker and he actually got caught. The way the USA policy is set up is that I'm**
81 **guilty because we share a room and I'm supposed to know everything that goes on in**
82 **the room even though I wasn't there at the time. So, I'm put into a situation where I**
83 **didn't get in a lot of trouble but I was put on notice for an incident that I just walked**
84 **into. I think there are a lot of issues regarding police protocol on campus. This**
85 **incident happened on February 8, 2011. I was doing laundry and he was coming**
86 **back in with some of his friends they were watching the Duke/UNC game and our**

87 CRL said there was a noise complaint. Um I guess we were being loud because we
88 were watching the game and I was downstairs washing laundry and when I came
89 back from the laundry from getting my clothes the police were there searching the
90 room and they requested for me to sign this white form for them to search my side of
91 the room which I agreed to because I had no issue with them searching the room. But
92 once they found paraphernalia they put both of us in the citation instead of just him.
93 They said because I was in proximity of the items I should have known about them.
94 Also my roommate did not take responsibility for the items that were found. The
95 case was dismissed due to police error. Knowing what you know now, would you still
96 select the college that you are now attending? If Yes, please explain. If No, please explain.
97 Yes I would, because I really for the most part do appreciate the learning
98 experiences. Because if I would have went to my number one school, I probably
99 would have never have dealt with this type of situation (referring to drugs in his room
100 and being charged) in the first place. I am not happy with the situation, but I learned
101 from it.

102 What would you change about yourself that might enhance your success at your college?
103 Uh I wish I was more proactive finding a mentor early on. I don't know how I would
104 have found a mentor but most likely I would have looked in my major at the faculty.
105 I probably would have found it difficult finding a faculty member I could relate too
106 because when I think about a mentor it's not all about education. It's somebody to
107 look to about personal and social issues as well so I think it would have been
108 challenging and honestly I don't know if I would have been able to do it as a
109 freshman.

110 What could your college do to increase your chances of success? Honestly, I wish there
111 would have been a program for minorities to be paired up with a mentor early on. I
112 wish that could have been something that was implemented during SOAR so we could
113 have had the opportunity before we even enrolled in classes to meet the individual
114 and get the needed information and advice before we select classes or select majors or
115 anything like that. Honestly, SOAR was a waste of time for what the purpose of what
116 SOAR was supposed to be. I have really been advising myself because I take the
117 time to look at my course requirements and the classes I needed and I take it to my
118 assigned advisor and they approve it as long as I fulfill the requirements they approve
119 my schedule.

APPENDIX F

DISSERTATION FOCUS GROUP RAW INTERVIEW DATA

Dissertation Focus Group Interview- Joshua, Mickey
Randy, Terry and Jonathan 4/16/14

Talk to me about your experience on campus as far as it related to your classroom activities dealing with your professors and dealing with your peers in either group related situations or when turning in assignments or receiving assignments and receiving guidance from your professors or whomever you depend on? **Joshua** – I would say as far as my advisors and professors it isn't racial conflict but they have lower expectations since I'm black. If I do something that an average student should do, they are profound or they are excited to see that I can do that when it should just be the regular thing. When working with my peers I don't find it any more different, it's just basically more of the same thing. **Randy**, like Joshua said I feel like if I don't push myself or make myself known to my teachers or any of my professors or anybody that's trying to give me guidance they will not help me. They will only push me if I want to seek some type of way to get pushed or elaborate more, emphasis more on my passion on trying to make a craft for myself as far as working with others. As far as working with my peers, uh there's some inconsistencies going on there I think the expectations are very, very low. I think everybody is a little bit more focused on themselves instead of really focused on the bigger picture or focused on the way we can make happen or talk about the change that we always preach about. **Jonathan**, I think as far as peers go uh a lot of time especially if I am in a group with other white students you know they probably expect me to do less and a lot of times I played into the hands of that if there was an expected behavior, stereotype of the black kid doesn't work a lot of times I play into the hands of that you know it's because they will offer me a lighter load like prime example with this class I'm in we have a lot of group work for the first two parts they offered me less work and so I wasn't I didn't say let me get more work but I have notices that a lot of times if it's like black member I feel as if they give me less work because they probably don't trust me as much with the heavier work load so I think as far as teachers go or professors like I expressed in my one on one professors to me really don't care like **Randy** said they only push you as far as much as you want to be pushed honestly I say the majority of the professors here not all of the professors I'd say 90%. **Terry**, I agree with all of them as far as the professors and advisors. You just have to motivate yourself, find motivation to succeed in your classwork and homework and everything because they won't they rarely reach out a hand and say ok

I see you struggling what can I do the help you what can I do to get your grades up. As far as peers like they said within group work they expect you right out of the gate that you are going to not do as well as everybody else in the group so they do give you a less work load so in my mind I thinking I have to go above and beyond and take the initiative just to show that I am not what they expected I can actually do more I have the potential to do more so it just puts more work load on me trying to do more than they expect me to do. **Mickey** - I agree with everybody else uh with professors' classroom and stuff like that. I have seen instances where there is shock that you know more than what they thought you would know. So it's more just taking the initiative to go and talk with them about issues you have in regards to your grades. As far as peers in group settings with project and stuff I am the only African American in my production group. The last two projects I have noticed they have given me less amount of responsibility um and they just had me doing little tasks and I have been doing that for both projects umm so yeah I have notices they only give you a little amount because they don't think it's your cup of tea or they don't think it's not your cup of tea they don't think you know a lot so they give you less.

How often on campus do you feel like you are misunderstood as an African

American male trying to achieve success and graduate from the university? **Joshua**, I would say that the number one thing I am misunderstood on is my ambition from black and white peers, mostly from my white peers they don't understand my background coming from a single parent household and seeing my mom struggle and the time I put into getting my studies and maintaining the GPA that I hold. They really just don't understand the ambition and why I'm fighting the way that I do fight. **Jonathan**, um I feel like I am almost misunderstood more from my black peers in the sense of going outside of my educational style part more in the lifestyle. College for a lot of us is a get away from home. It's almost like um somebody described it to me the other day as a controlled freedom I thought that was very good. Not even talking about school just the college lifestyle, I mean I don't, I'm not much of a partier or much of a go outer or anything like that, I find that most of the time by my black peers I am kinda of questioned, in music choice you know, I like folk music you know so it's like I'm kinda questioned on why I don't fit the mold that the typical black college student would fit. I don't have that many interactions with other white students unless it's at the gym like as far as on campus, I feel like I have never really known that many white people here well non-blacks. I feel like I am more misunderstood by my black peers than others. **Mickey**, I feel like I am misunderstood the most when it comes to stepping out of the norms with my African American peers. I have a lot of AA peers that live up to the stereotypes that live to the minimums. When I go back home and they see me excelling they look at me like what's the point type of face. I feel like I am really misunderstood when it comes to stepping out of the norm of our stereotypical lives. **Terry**, for me it's being in Greek life being

misunderstood in the sense that when you meet somebody who um only sees Greek life on tv or NPR they want you to do some steps or some strolls or something so I did my probate and they went to see that. But they don't really understand all the work that we put in to run my organization and to hold programs on campus. All they want to see is parties, or hitting me up about parties or getting into parties free or um who do I need to talk to about getting in free. They don't really reach out as far as trying to attend these programs that we put on for the campus. So I feel like I am misunderstood in that sense. **Randy**, I feel like I am misunderstood because I am living in what I call a double stereotype of not just being an AA male but also a light skinned AA male and being misunderstood for my education. I think people look upon the stereotypes more than the look upon my education. They don't understand my thirst for knowledge rather my passion like Jamal mentioned I think they just see me in a hopeless way when I talk about doing things with working with African American males as far as advancing the black community. They look at me like I'm crazy and that I'm going to end up going around in circles. I'm also miseducated/lead again to the stereotypes not getting into the colorism but not only being a black male but the light skin stereotypes also fall through as well, so I'm already prejudged and already put into a particular stigma or mindset and I'm also seen to act in particular ways so I have to carry a lot of negativity around me too. So I feel for some of the black guys who are miseducated or misunderstood. **Jonathan** going off Terry um as far as the Greek life thing goes. As far as myself goes I'll be honest I fall into the stereotype of not on the side of like wanting to know about the parties and stuff but I will be honest my experience with Greek life cause all I know is UNCG cause I've never seen Stomp the Yard my only experience for Greek life is here and I'll be honest, this is my honest opinion. I think Greek life is crazy, I sent out a tweet about a week or two ago cause all I see is people doing it strictly for the nonsense like the parties, girls people paying about a 1000 or two to get some friends. I will say this the Alpha's (you are an Alpha right) are the only organization I can say as far as the predominantly black fraternities go that I can see actually trying to do something decent like do something that they actually say they are about. Some other fraternities you know I'm not going to throw their names out there say they are about service and leadership and all that stuff no, no from I've seen in my years here I hear about the process you have to go through to get into it and then you see them at probate and all the hype and then you see them wearing the colors every day and there's not push for excellence. The Greek life at USA is the closes thing to fitting the black stereotype as I've seen. You put on your colors your fresh Js or whatever and then you just go around and stunt I guess that's all I've seen. But after hearing that I'm like it's good to hear somebody is in a fraternity doing what the fraternity says it's about because what I've seen here it looks like a bunch of hog wash it looks crazy to me. Sorry I didn't mean to get so crunk, I get passionate man, I lost a friend to Greek life man. He was my friend and we

were tight and it was me, Lamar and this other kid and we became real tight until he became a certain fraternity and he became a member and it's like now he sees himself in this grand light and we're like we knew you when we were listening to Tiger back in 2010 we knew you before you had all these friends when we were going to the Rec every day and not that he's paid a bunch of money and took a couple of beatings he thinks he is all of a sudden on this higher scale of life. It drives me crazy and I'm sorry for going at Greek life so hard but like from what I'm seen it makes young black college kids look crazy. (Room erupts with laughter).

Out in the public domain, African American males are perceived as disengaged or angry and don't want to achieve anything in life, they just want it handed out to them. What's your impressions of that do you feel it is justified or is there a greater desire by young African American males to succeed? Joshua, I don't think that young African American males are angry, I think it's more of a passion that's misunderstood to go back in reference to the last questions. I think African American's in general just because of our ethnicity and our background, we have more of a passion to a different caliber than what the typical American, white, Hispanic are used to and it's shown in a different form and they misunderstand it and see it anger. 9 times out of 10 it's passion for a driven cause because they saw something in their life or they want to attain something in their life and people don't understand it so I think it's a misunderstood passion rather than anger. **What about the notion of disengagement?** Joshua, I don't think it's disengagement, for some it may be culture shock or it may be an environment they are not accustom to because they grew up a different way. A lot of the times they are not disengaged they are just trying to find themselves and trying to find someone to help them along the way. So it's not that they are disengaged because disengaged is a choice it's more like a lost and it's not a choice and they are lost because they don't understand where they're at or where they should be going and a lot of times the ones that are disengaged do find themselves and get on the path to go to where they are going. **Randy**, I think a lot of these problems being disengaged or angry is only within the African American males I feel like we put ourselves in those stereotypes and we bring those perceptions upon ourselves and we put ourselves in those situations and we put ourselves in that mentality. I think the only way to avoid that is to stop thinking like that and to just flip the whole mindset, flip the whole mentality that's making us to be viewed in that way. I agree with Jamal I think we are just more passionate and more misunderstood than anything. If you strip away somebody from their choices or if you limit their choices, they are going to do things that's going to make them seem angry or disengaged so I feel like it's just limiting the African Americans males which makes them so angry and disengaged but at the same time they just carry on the perceptions instead of wanting to change it. **Terry**, as far as the angry aspect I feel like its' more so stress from just working harder than the white population on

campus. A lot of us is on financial aid we still have to work as far as organizations we want to get that on our resume so we can strive harder so employers will want to hire us. Just in general working harder just adding stress to our lives rather than I see a lot of the white students around campus skateboards you know just hanging out chillin but I know the group of individuals I'm with we are always working, we're always doing something a lot of times it can be stressful and it can change your mood or emotions especially if things don't go your way. As far as disengaged oh another thing towards anger I feel like a lot of the media televisions specifically portrays that with black people because watching tv shows like Love and hip hop, real housewives, basketball wives, the only thing on there is drama and sadly that's what a lot of our black people are attracted to drama. So I feel like that triggers a lot of the anger within the black population on campus. As far as being disengaged, I don't really have to say too much about that like I said I feel like it has a lot to do with us working harder than a lot of other individuals, staying focused on our grades school organizations and working all the time you can become disengaged with your surrounding trying to focus on everything and try to strive to be a better person than you are. **Mickey**, when it comes to the anger part like Jamal said I think our anger is mistaken for an excessive amount of passion and also for the disengagement I feel like because we are so passionate and driven to succeed that we get lost in the environment that we are trying to succeed in so I feel like sometimes that is where the disengagement comes in. **Jonathan**, as far as anger goes, I love what Jordan said because I'm more passionate my dislike for Hip Hop and it's for certain reasons not that the music's bad or anything it's because a lot of hip hop especially now days it's so like it has just a negative connotation with it and the part that drives me crazy that the most of the negativity in the song it's black towards black. I get so mad at people like Jay-Z and people like Kanye and all these people because it's like for so long black people we wanted like a face in American we wanted a voice and now that we have a voice the majority of the people that have a voice look what they do with the voice. They get on love and hip hop and act crazy or get on basketball wives so it's like all we can do as Americans I guess is take what we see. So that's why I was talking to this young lady and her mother didn't want her dating young black men. Her mother is from Korea straight from Korea like born in Korea. I'm thinking if I came from Korea or another country and I turned on my tv my first day in American turned on my tv and I saw how a black boy was acting, I wouldn't want my daughter or son dating a black person either. So it's like I think the anger comes by association because like I said the black people with the voice or a lot of black people limelight they get on tv and act crazy even with the preacher show you know now that attacks religion. Even something that's supposed to be speaking peace and goodness of Jesus Christ even that's on there with drama so it's like that's by association. Now disengagement I blame that on the professors because you can't expect us as black students or any other student to be able

to automatically adapt to your culture and anyone who teaches you are going to teach what you know. It's like if you squeezing a tube of toothpaste, toothpaste is going to come out because that's what it's filled with so as a teacher whatever you are from whatever you behold that's what you're going to become and it's going to come out in your teaching but you can't expect us to adapt to that. Teachers and professors should be able to assimilate to our culture and make lesson plans and things that are more relevant to us but until they do that you cannot expect us to just adapt to you. So until then a lot of us will be disengaged because we don't have that toothpaste in us. They need to go out and buy some more toothpaste you know and make it more diverse. **Randy**, I want to add something to that too. Jonathan and Terry said something that stuck out to me too and that is we have accepted stereotypes. I think the accepted stereotypes is drawing us further away because we don't necessarily understand the culture that we live in and our culture doesn't understand us and since we have this gap between us that's why creating this collision and that's why we have such disorder in our community because we don't completely understand the situation that we are in. We are either too left field or too right field and we just really haven't come up with a commonality or trying to make ourselves as neutral as possible. **Joshua**, this is going a bit off topic just to kinda contradict what Brandon said as far as hip hop you have artist as far as the last poets from the 70's that speak about brotherhood talk about universalism, what the white man did, how money makes people act, and it's talking about building up communities but you don't have people listening to them. You have people like Tupac that made songs as far as "Dear Momma" that talked about the struggles about the neighborhood. Never had a friend like me that really talked about the struggles of the neighborhood so all hip hop isn't negative, it's just the hip hop that some people want to hear and it's what you choose to listen too. At the same time that artist has to make a living, if I can make a song that's talking about brotherhood and it gets 300 plays and I can take and make the same song with a different beat talking about trapping, shooting and hanging out at the club and people listen to it why would I continue to make the one that's talking about uplifting people? So I don't think it's the artist themselves, but I think it's the industry and how it displays us and uses us to manipulate ourselves, it's kind of like Geppetto using a puppet master to control the people. Cause the see the people that have succeeded and if he's talking about selling drug, guess what everybody else that looks up to him is going to do..... he's going to sell drugs. But if he is talking about positive, they will cut those strings and he will never be a puppet again. They will have to go get a new puppet that's willing to talk about drugs so they can control the audience. **Mickey** – Basically going off of what Joshua was saying I guess what Brandon was kinda getting at is like umm big names Jay-Z, I can't really throw none off the dome right now but big names out there like that I think what he was basically getting at was if you are so big and have so much power in the industry why can't you take

that initiative to create something positive and lead by example and then maybe it would create something different so the industry wouldn't use us as puppets and make it so we've got that negative connotation but I think that's what he is kinda getting at. **Joshua** – I agree with both Mickey and Jonathan you both have great points I'm not saying you are wrong about the industry as far as making negative music at all. Hip hop does have a negative connotation I'm just saying there is a positive light out there. As far as the audience to go to use an analogy that someone told me a few months ago if you take a young boy and you feed him dog food from the age that he is born until he's 18. On his 18th birthday if you offer him dog food or steak what do you think he's going to take the dog food because that's what he's accustom to. So if you have rap that's been made since the 80's that been talking about shooting, killing, murdering, hip hop prostitution you can't just offer this cleansed music that's talking about uplifting because people are not accustom to it they are not going to take it, they are not going to know how to take it. It's going to be a culture shock again then the leaders we do have they are going to fall off. Then it won't be any leaders again so I think it's a slow process but I definitely agree with both of you all because hip hop right now the face of it is a negative connotation and it can be cleansed.

Talk to me a little bit about mentors and that can be both peer mentors and or faculty/staff. In the interviews some had good mentors some had not experienced mentors and some did not want mentors for various reasons. So let's hear about that as a group and how it impacts you, or it disengages you, or it moves you or it doesn't move you. **Mickey** – As far as peer mentors go, I have a lot of peer mentors that that person doesn't know but they lead by example which moves me in a way that I wouldn't explicitly go out and tell them. I have been notified that I have been a mentor to some people uh being a mentor to peers really is an eye opener knowing that there is something right that you are doing that someone else is looking at and then vise versa to somebody else. As far as faculty staff type of mentors they are really key and they really play a big role in futuristically and presently speaking. I guess what I am trying to get at is for myself is I really need my mentor there it doesn't have to be on a daily basis type thing as far as like I'm cool with checking in every two day out the week something like that even though I can't get in touch with you every day but it's just like knowing that you are there and you have time and you make time when I need something it really is uplifting especially having a black mentor makes it even better I mean that's just my personal experience. **Randy**- I never really grew up with a mentor and I have had to do things on my own and I've been kinda paying for it but now I can see the effects it has on my now because if I did have a mentor back then I think especially an African American male mentor has really carried me a long way and has really, really narrowed my path down because I was thinking in broad perspectives and in a perspective that can be seen as a little bit biased. It really

makes a difference because they can show you avenues they can talk about their experiences and it can give you some commonalities to really, really help you see what you can do to better the community and where you can really fit into the society that you really misunderstand. A mentor it really means something, its seeing somebody that's putting you in a position that you can really see yourself in. When I mentor peers I'm really having some frustrations with my mentee because he doesn't see the light but I realize that me coming in there every day, me talking to him, me getting on him is making a difference because he is improving his behavior as well as his academic success slowly but surely and just taking out that time to mentor to him is really, really giving him that opportunity to say that there was somebody on me since the age of ten years old that was trying to show me the way and he's brought me a long way from where I coming from. Not just looking for a mentor but being a mentor is really important as well. It makes a difference in your life especially for African American males and call them your mentors who are doing things you can actually see yourself doing and that can show me the different ways to actually make it. **Joshua** – I think its three levels of mentors kinda how Mickey and Randy touched on you can have someone below you at a younger age, you can have some- one on your same level which is your peer and then you can have a mentor yourself someone that you look up to. As far as the younger age mentor I think I learn from my mentee just as much as he learns from me. Just as a golden rule that were taught as a child or centered to day to day life as far as always keeping a positive attitude, setting goals I think these are things that are given to us in elementary but they are not pressed through middle school or high school and we lose those golden rules which are really essential to get through life. As far as my peers a couple of you all in this room are really my mentors and you really don't know it the same way as Mickey said your daily actions even if we don't interact and talk regularly, the way you carry yourself, the way you go to class, the way you are involved on campus, the things you do, the way you talk to people, the way you care for people it moves me and lets me know I'm not out here by myself. Also, having a mentor someone to look up to it's kinda guidance, it's like if you don't have a mentor it's kinda like creating a color that you have never seen before and if you take the time to actually try to do that you can't it's impossible, you have to see it first. So having a black mentor especially a black male mentor allows me to see myself progress. It allows me to see myself in ten, fifteen, twenty years and what I am capable of cause if you don't have that image you are just shooting in the dark. You don't know who you are, you don't know where you are going, you are just going down the path that someone gives you. I think having a mentor in all three aspects is the greatest part. **Terry** – With me I feel like um, two types of mentors are beneficial. You have your older mentors and then you have your younger mentors around the same age as you. Older mentors have more wisdom, they've been around long and have more experiences especially the ones around their 50's and 60's

they lived through hard times back to segregation just getting over it. So they have a lot of wisdom and knowledge for you that you can apply to everyday settings. Mentors around the same age as you they can relate to you. Cause you are not too far apart in age so they have been through experiences. Recent experiences and um you know really allow them to are just telling you what mistakes they made so you won't make them coming up. A lot of times its hard especially high school students it's hard for them to listen because you know you mentor them for about an hour and then they are back with their friends who are majority of the time negative individuals so they are around that negativity more than they are around you which is like a couple of positive people. So it's really hard to get it in their heads what they need to do to succeed because they are around that negative environment at school and the neighborhood and then what they see on tv and hip hop music. So you can only go so far I feel like it's a process it's like what Randy said slowly but surely you know they start to get it so at the end of the day you don't want them to make the same mistakes you made coming up so. **Jonathan-** I've never had the experience of a mentor uh the closest thing I would even fathom is kinda my dad but he worked a lot growing up. My mom and my dad are still together and everything, but like my dad sold cars so that is an up and down business you know a lot of late nights you know. But I never really had like a set mentor and I never really mentored anyone either it's like what you said about creating a color I don't really know what it's like to have that mentor in your life like that person to kinda strive to be almost like I said the only person I could even think of is my dad because I really admire my dad but even then I had to see him in like he was around but I didn't get to spend as much time as I would have liked to. So I could kinda strive for that. I like what you said about only getting to spend an hour with the kids because it reminds me of like when I(became a Christian last year in January like when I finally understood Christ and everything I really understood what it meant because now I feel like that's my mentor, Jesus that's who I strive to be like now and you can't really live a Christian lifestyle by just going to church on Sunday spending an hour with God and then that's all you get for the week. Because it's like what you said you are going to spend way more time being influenced by the world and by people. That's the thing I've learned probably the most out of this last 16 months and so it's like I see the same thing can apply to the people you would mentor you know it's like the more time you spend with them and the more time you spend studying with them or just the daily conversations the more you grow and the more they are going to become like you because it's a relationship. So I know some people don't like to bring church into it but it's like that's what it means the most to me. So when I hear the mentor thing it just automatically makes me think of my walk with Christ every day I can't strive to have this relationship with God if I only spend two hours with him on Sunday. I don't read his word, I don't

strive to learn as much about him as I can because when I leave that comfortable setting I will go back to the other things that affect me the most.

So having talked all of this through and as we are beginning to wind down I want you to think about and talk to me briefly about what would you change what could you change about your overall experience educational wise that would have the most significant impact on helping you become what it is that you want to become. What would you change about it? This could be elementary, high school or college what aspect would you alter. It could be the system, the teachers, the way you're tested whatever. What would you change as you are striving to move forward. Mickey –

What I would change was back in high school, well I would have changed two things, for one I would have changed my involvement in High school I wasn't really active within my school's community, other than athletics. All I did was athletics and class didn't really join much of anything else. Kinda really had an in-crowd kinda only really hung around certain people, my teammates uh couple of friends, couple of neighborhood friends that's about it. But the other thing I would really change is the SAT testing when it comes to high school, one because I noticed that GPA isn't everything. It doesn't really reflect intelligence by that I mean like you can take someone with a 4.0 GPA and someone with a 2.8 GPA, the person with the 4.0 GPA possibly could have cheated the system could have cheated his way through on the test and exams, etc. still have a 4.0 GPA but yet the person with the 2.8 GPA could have worked his butt off probably not a good test taker but yet he understands how the world functions and he can survive in the world other than that guy with the 4.0. But the way the society is set up the guy with the 4.0 will get looked at better than the guy with the 2.8 just because it's this big thing around education where it's grades first, grades first, grades first (as he is stating this Mickey is using his fist to emphasize his point by hitting the table top). I have actually witnessed a lot of successful people who came out of high school that didn't go to college that's making a lot more money than people that's been in college for four, five, six, seven, eight years doing undergraduate and graduate work. My uncle came out he dropped out of high school his sophomore year started doing his family business now he took his family business off the ground, co-sponsored with another business, CEO of another business and someone that's been in college trying to be a CEO of a firm or something like that would probably take much steps much more longer to do something like that just because his GPA might be higher he might be able to get up there eventually but just witnessed from first hand it's not all about grades so I feel like SAT test and stuff is kinda un-necessary but then again it could be necessary in the eyes of the system, but that's just kinda my opinion. For me I would say oh **Terry** – just trying to place more African American role models in the education system especially in the middle school and high school because I feel like that's where we really need those role models. Back in my high school at Grimsland there was only three

and Grimsland is a large high school, it was only three African American male teachers there. It was only one that really pushed his students who were the majority African American really pushed them really strived for them to reach their full potential. Like me even though I was making B's and A's he wanted me to make straight A's and that's what he pushed me to do. He also had the brothers in my chapter at that time come mentor us help us with the transition in high school help us while we were still in high school to strive to be successful and find a good college. So at the end of the day I feel like the African American teachers really help to push the students farther than just the regular teacher or white teacher who really only cares about just teaching and he can't really focus on everybody he just wants to teach and that's it. African American teachers they want to see you strive, they want to see you be successful so that's what they do outside of the regular school work and class work. They encourage you to stay after school and do more work or they encourage you to study more and they try to find tutors for you so that's the one thing I would change (Senior year graduating next year). Joshua – Terry and Mickey both made good points about changing the high school system but I think the educational system should be changed at the foundation which is elementary. I went to a title one elementary school so I know how it is to have a lot of African American students have to struggle and to be placed in these separate classrooms. For instance at one point in my life I was taking title one courses I think it was my third grade year and I it was because I didn't do good on the standardized test. It wasn't because all of my grades weren't that good; it was because of that one test. So they place you in this side room where you basically it's you and six to seven other students the majority of you are black and there is not a black teacher and you are right next door to the regular classroom so I think a lot of the time it's kinda creating this visual that you are inadequate or that you can't complete the other job they kind of place you over here like you're dumb but this is what the other class is doing but we're going to be three steps behind them until you get back on your right pace. I also think another thing about the education system we should change is that what they claim to be no child left behind they pass kids along because they don't want them to be left behind because of demographics such as age when they really don't understand the materials and it hurts them in the long run. A lot of the time I know a lot of my peers were passed along they really did not understand the information at all and it hurt them in the long run they didn't graduate from high school now they can't attend college because they don't have a high school diploma when the problem wasn't at the high school, the problem was elementary when they were getting passed along when they should have been getting mentored. They should have had somebody there to not just understand their demographics maybe their struggles at home and not just there to teach. Another thing I think about the education system that needs to be changed is the teachers. The qualifications for the teachers my major is accounting and I have to get certain

certifications such as the CPA exam and I have to pass certain certifications, for a teacher she can do four years of undergrad and if she knows someone at an elementary school she can get hired. She may be capable of teaching but she may not understand or have to the actual skills needed to thoroughly teach the material so that the kids retain it and pass her course, so I think that's definitely needs to be changed. **Randy** – Joshua, made a lot of points uh Joshua, Mickey and Terry made a lot of points that I want to point out too. I don't want to be too repetitive but I do want to change standard testing such as common core and SAT. They really do marginalize people to learn a particular way that they may not understand or that can be somewhat tricky or just going off the perception of what somebody else thinks is intelligent or academically achievable, I think that is very, very biased I think it doesn't really amount to anything and it only puts certain people in certain particular areas like Joshua, I was put into a lot of special learning classes. I wouldn't say anything that made me shy away from the average classes because I didn't have a problem I just had a problem with particular subjects and they put me in these other classes. They put me in these classes where I could spend more time with the subject and even with being inside those programs, the teachers still were not teaching me anything it was just the same particular way the teachers were teaching me before and they just thought I needed more time with that particular subject instead of just breaking it down to see what my real problem was. This travels with me through high school and college as well. I consider myself as a pass on student even though I was the smartest African American male in my class. I was able to go through AP courses as well but I still feel like I was passed along because the teachers were still unable to identify the problem with my academic success and achievement. So I think that a lot of the things that you have to go through in this educational system especially for African American males is very, very independent I feel like at a young age you have to force yourself to learn you have to force yourself to get it or you're just going to have to sit there and struggle just like you have to struggle your way through the educational system. Uh teachers I realize that uh especially learning about the ones at USA is that they have so much of a work load upon their shoulders that they have to teach you in a particular way and they are told to teach you in a particular way to make sure that you get it in a particular way to think in a particular way to train you in a particular way. This is a problem I feel like teacher need more of a leverage to teach the way the they feel like they can make the students more multitalented rather than just trained to do in a particular way or write a particular way or think a particular way. I think this is a problem with most of the educational systems shifting all the way down to the elementary school that's all I've got right now. **Jonathan** – I agree 100% with the last part of Randy's statement. Uh you know teachers like I talked about in the individual it's like the world has become boxy you know it's like teachers and professors no longer teach us how to learn, they just teach us what they know and they

teach us in the way that they know how to teach us and so instead of us learning more it's like we will never know more than our professors and teachers because all they know is what they are taught to teach us and so we will all remain in this box and it's like we will never get outside and no one will ever expend on learning or anything because all we will ever know is what we are taught. Until teachers and professors start teaching us how to learn instead of what to learn then we will always, this system will be failed. Another thing, I hate the school system because we're taught too much you know when you are taught too much there is not depth of learning uh I have it referred to as the paint. It's like when a teacher has to teach 180 different thing 180 different days in the high school it's like putting on one thin layer of paint and by the time that layer is put on we have to put on another layer and so it's like we will never have the same layer in-depth or clean coat of paint because it's always a bunch of different paint being painted on and by the time we remember what we learned Monday we got to learn something new on Tuesday and so it's like I would rather them teach us four different things over 180 days but teach us to the core teach us in depth than teach us 180 different things cause who can learn 180 different things in 180 days? There's no layers of learning because there is no layers of teaching and it's just back to standardized testing that's another thing that's wrong with standardized test it's like we have to remember so much and everything is about testing it's like we don't learn stuff to learn it we learn it to remember to put it on a test. So by the time the test is done, did anybody have a test last week? I bet if it was a standardized test, I bet we can't remember half of what was on the test because all we remember is to remember the answer. We are not taught to remember how we got to that answer or the process it took to get to that answer. We just remember the answer so five years later down the road I will graduate with a history degree and if they gave me a test right now on history and they gave me a test the day after I graduated from high school I bet my scores would be almost identical because I myself I feel like I cheated the college system because I learned how to learn how to pass college. Instead of learning history and now in the long run it's really going to cost me because I couldn't tell you a single thing about history because I have no layers of learning of anything and that's just the system. **Joshua -** Jonathan to be honest it's not really your fault that you didn't retain any of the information. That's what you have got professors for you are paying \$18k per year to be going for a qualified educational it's not your fault. I think Tom Ford really spoke on the educational system, I'm sorry not Tom Ford, Henry Ford spoke on it. Before he produced the Model "T" Car before he massed produced it for the United States a lot of people were trying to say he was inadequate to run a company. They were saying this because he didn't have a college degree. What he basically said this is paraphrasing this isn't word for word he basically said I don't have to be the most intelligent man in the room. I have a button I can press here to get the intelligent man up here. Like you said the intelligent man that do

know all this information is stuck in a box it's the man that knows how to manipulate these intelligent men to get the information they need that succeed. That's why the education is the way it is it's not about how smart you are, it's really about who you know where you know what you need to do how you need to do it and can you get somebody to do it for you. **Mickey** – Basically touching off of what Brandon said, um I agree with Joshua, it's not our fault that we can't retain the information but I think where they lack in the system is the way I retain information personally is through repetition. I retain information through constantly dealing with it every day. So especially speaking for math, math is levels then you go off of another math level that builds off of division. They are so focused making you learn such complex equations and complex information that they forget it's the basics that actually got you where you are and that's going to help you in life and so all this unnecessary complications that they give you I guess steers you away from the core of where your education really came from. **Randy** – Carter G. Woodson made a statement in the *Mis-education of the Negro*, he said if you control a man's thinking you don't have to worry about his actions. It's like what LW said it's just like a control thing man like Henry Ford said just press that button and get the most educated man in here then he's good to go. In some sense even though he's educated he's controlled because there is somebody who is not as educated as him that's controlling his actions. Just like that puppet that you had mentioned earlier. It's just hard and I feel like the teacher who do want to teach cause I do have teacher that want to teach me. I have a teacher right now that's trying to work on my writing to make it precise and to make it better and to articulate it better because I can talk good but I cannot put it on paper she is trying to do that but I have other teachers that's trying to give me these basics ok you gotta take a test here, you got to take a test there, you gotta take a test here, you gotta take a test here. It kinda taking away from that teacher whose trying to help me with my writing something I am going to have to use in my career field when I go on to grad school. If you are not a good writer you are not going to get too far especially if you are going to express your thoughts about a particular for my case social event or social equality that's going on within this country it takes me away. I feel like growing up especially as an African American male, you are a percentage student you make a certain percentage on this test to get you to this level. You make a certain percentage on that test to get to a certain level. You make a certain percentage, your GPA is a certain percentage from the broken down courses that you made because you made certain percentages on test that qualify you as successful or what they think as successful. We just have a really, really tough time at knowing how to prepare students to be successful educationally I feel like especially with this generation our education is being really, really, really taken foregranted and we are not training people to take over these jobs in the next 30 or 40 years. We are being trained to

just memorize, memorize, we are just memorizing things like we are just memorizing that's how we beat the system by memorizing not critical thinking.